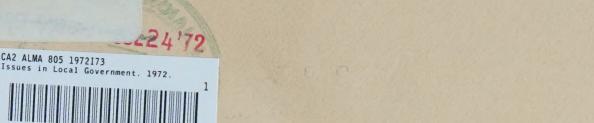
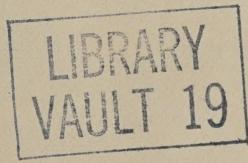
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FOREWORD

The Task Force on Urbanization and the Future has been considering problems of local government through a number of its task committees. The Edmonton task committee on urban government effectiveness has been particularly concerned with these problems. The task committees on the potentials of smaller cities and towns, and the task committees on regional planning effectiveness, have considered these problems as well.

This publication is intended to provide background information relating to the work of these committees and to raise pertinent questions. Its purpose is essentially to summarize the state of the debate on this matter at this point in time.

INTRODUCTION

Among the problems facing Alberta as a result of increasing urbanization are those involving the local government system.

On the one hand there are problems in governing the large and growing cities, problems related to their continual expansion, to the effective (i.e. efficient and responsive) delivery of services and provisions of facilities in these cities, and to the financing of these services and facilities.

On the other hand there are problems in governing the rural areas and smaller urban centres, problems stemming from the generally low (and usually decreasing) density of rural population, and from the small populations in towns and villages. It is becoming more and more difficult for rural town and village governments to provide the services their citizens have come to expect, to compete in a complex society, and to develop each community with due regard to the economic, ecological, and social interests of the whole region within which it is located.

It should be noted here that, in this pamphlet, the term "local government" includes municipal councils, school boards, (separate and public), and counties—the three kinds of directly elected bodies which serve Alberta local areas and which have taxing powers. Divers boards established by these governments and/or the Province, boards which in effect "govern" the delivery of certain local services but which are not directly elected, are not considered to be local governments. Their roles are nevertheless important in understanding the total local government system and accordingly they will be discussed in Part Three of the pamphlet. District hospital boards, which also are directly elected in part, are considered to be special purpose boards, because the degree to which they are elected

is determined by municipalities, and because they do not have taxing powers.

It may be said that issues in local government necessarily revolve around the eternal question, to centralize or decentralize. Centralization may be either geographic (bringing together a number of separately governed geographic areas under a new common government) or functional (the bringing together under one administration of a number of separately administered activities).

In this pamphlet three major issues are identified and posed in terms of the centralization or decentralization question.

Part One of the pamphlet deals with local government boundaries and categories in terms of centralization or decentralization among existing local governments of each type. This part of the pamphlet is particularly concerned with the pros and cons of regional government (geographic centralization), and the county system (functional centralization). Possibilities for recategorizing municipal governments are also considered in this Part.

Part Two of the pamphlet deals with local government powers, responsibilities, and financial resources in relation to the Provincial Government. It is concerned with centralization or decentralization between local governments as a group and the Province. In particular the degree to which financial and legal powers should be given to local governments (geographic decentralization), and the merits of attempting to centralize certain functions under the Provincial Government, are considered in this Part.

Part three of the pamphlet discusses the organization of local governments in terms of centralization or decentralization within each governmental unit. Wards, neighbourhood councils, etc. (geographic decentralization) and special purpose boards (functional decentralization) are of chief interest here.

PART I

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES AND CATEGORIES

THE PRESENT SYSTEM

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

The primary division of municipal government in Alberta is between rural units and urban units, on the basis of density of development.

Urban Municipalities

Under the Municipal Government Act, urban municipalities are divided into summer villages, villages, towns, and cities, on the basis of powers and responsibilities given to the municipalities and on the basis of size. At the present time, to qualify for summer village status a hamlet (hamlets are not incorporated and have no official status) must have 50 separate dwellings "each of which has been occupied as a dwelling at any time during the six-month period preceding (the receipt of a petition) . . . signed by at least fifty per cent of the proprietary electors . . . of the proposed summer village." A village is formed if the hamlet contains at least 75 separate dwellings having been continuously occupied for the six months previously upon receipt of a petition signed by fifty per cent of the proprietary electors. A town may be formed from a village if the village contains at least 1,000 people and the village council requests it. A city may be formed from a town of over 10,000 inhabitants if the town council requests this. (1)

In all cases the change in status is determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council (Provincial Cabinet). The Cabinet can, for any reason whether requested or not by the local people, reduce a city to a town, a town to a village, but need not do so just because the population or housing count drops below the originally required number. A village, summer village or municipal district may be dissolved as a municipality. Actually, a number of municipalities presently have less than the population now required by legislation to enjoy the status they have. This is because there have been continual changes in the legislated requirements for various kinds of incorporations and because in some cases municipalities' populations have declined. (2)

Alberta also provides for the establishment of new towns, but not through the Municipal Government Act. It is the New Towns Act that provides for new towns being formed, on the advice of the Provincial Planning Board, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. A new town is governed by a board of administrators which may or may not, in whole or in part, be elected by the new town residents. New towns are established when there is rapid development in an existing town or when there is the creation of a large settlement in a frontier resource region. New towns can be changed into other types of municipality, of course, or can be dissolved. There are presently five new towns in Alberta: Fort McMurray, Fox Creek, Grande Cache, Hinton and High Level. (3)

For general purposes and for the purposes of other legislation, summer villages are considered to be villages and new towns, towns.

In dealing with rapidly urbanizing metropolitan areas, Alberta, perhaps more than any other province has sought to keep such areas under a single city government. The Royal Commission on the metropolitan development of Calgary and Edmonton (McNally Commission) laid the basis for this approach with its report in 1956, which established two major guidelines for setting city boundaries:

(a) "It is unjust and inequitable that wide variations in the tax base should exist among local governing bodies that comprise one metropolitan area where that area is in fact one economic social unit."

(b) "A metropolitan area which is in fact one economic and social unit can ordinarily be more efficiently and effectively governed by one central municipal authority than by a multiplicity of local governing bodies."

As a result of this report Calgary's boundaries were extended to encompass the whole urbanized area by 1961. Edmonton annexations proceeded more slowly so that today there are still concerns in Edmonton about fragmented government in the metropolitan area. (4)

Rural Municipalities

Under Section 14 of the Municipal Government Act, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may form into a "municipal district" any part of Alberta not included in a city, town, new town, village or summer village — municipal districts are thus rural municipalities.

Rural municipalities in Alberta actually developed somewhat more slowly than urban municipalities, primarily because at the turn

of the century there was a very low density of population in the rural areas of what is now Alberta, while towns were already of sufficient size to conduct their own affairs. The North-West Municipal Ordinance, passed by the North-West Territories Council in 1883, provided for the establishment of both rural municipalities and towns. (5) Calgary was incorporated as a town in 1884 and by 1899 Lethbridge, Edmonton, Fort McLeod, and Medicine Hat had similarly been incorporated. No rural municipalities were organized in Alberta under the Ordinance, however, because the provision that they must be at least 144 square miles in area proved unrealistic in the very early days of settlement.

Rural municipal government really did not get under way in Alberta until 1893, when the Statute Labour and Fire Ordinance of 1890 was amended to provide for the organization of single townships (36 square miles) into Statute Labour and Fire districts. By 1896, 36 such districts had been organized in Alberta. From this beginning local government in rural areas of Alberta continued to develop with more and more area being organized into increasingly larger rural municipalities.

In 1918 the Provincial Government renamed the 88 existing rural municipalities "municipal districts" and caused 80 "organized local improvement districts" to be formed into municipal districts. Each of these municipal districts had an area of about 9 townships. Through these years the rural municipalities steadily took on more powers and responsibilities such that the municipal districts after 1918 were to provide for local public works and roads, public welfare, sanitation and health, and protection to persons and property. The more thinly settled parts of the Province were divided into improvement districts, also of nine townships each, through which the Provincial Government performed municipal services provided elsewhere by the municipal districts.

From 1918 to 1941 there was little new organization of rural municipal districts; indeed, during the 1920's and 1930's more districts disorganized because of drought and the depression than organized. Three new districts were organized during the 1920's and 1930's, but 27 were disorganized, of which 21 later became part of what are now the Special Areas of the Province. In 1940 there were 143 municipal district in Alberta. In 1941 the Municipal Districts Act was amended to provide for a program to enlarge municipal districts. By 1944 the number of municipal districts had been reduced to 60, 18 of which being still small ones whose boundaries had been left practically unchanged.

The new enlarged municipal districts represented about three old municipal districts or about 1,000 square miles. Thus, from 1893 to the 1940's the rural municipalities had been steadily increased in size to where municipal districts became and still are some thirty times the size of the first Statute Labour districts.

In 1953 the boundaries of most municipal districts were modified along with those of the school divisions so that the two would be coterminous in rural areas. The resulting municipal district boundaries (or county boundaries, where municipal districts have been transformed into counties) have pretty well persisted to the present day.

Where there are no rural municipalities, the rural areas are administered under improvement districts with municipal functions being carried out directly by the Province, or under special areas, which, as has been noted, were formed in the 1930's in response to special agricultural conditions in the east-central part of the Province. The special areas are also administered by the Province through a board which meets in Hanna.

Like the municipal districts, the improvement districts have been steadily growing in size; in fact the latest consolidation was on January 1, 1969, when 51 improvement districts were consolidated to 24.

All national parks, including "townsites" such as Banff, Jasper and Waterton, are administered as improvement districts. The Province's role here is mostly in the provision of services to persons (health, education, etc.). There are no municipalities in the national parks.

The 8 Metis colonies in Alberta are administered (through the Department of Health and Social Development) separately from the improvement districts within which they lie.

The 45 Indian Reserves in the Province are entirely separate from municipalities, improvement districts or special areas. They are ultimately the responsibility of the Federal Government, though increasingly the Reserves are being administered by locally elected councils.

SCHOOL BOARDS

The history of Alberta school boards is as old as that of municipal government, beginning in 1884, when the North-West Territories School Ordinance providing for public and separate schools was put into effect and the Territories' first district was formed in Edmonton. The early school districts were very small (from 12 to 16 square miles, making them about half the size of the earliest municipalities), were totally independent of municipal government (they set and collected their own

ALBERTA MUNICIPAL STATISTICS

Least area (sq. mi.)	2.8 Wetaskiwin	0.3 Trochu	0.1 Galahad	583 Strathcona No. 20	289 Spirit River No. 133	75 No. 13	1,370 No. 4	l acre Carcajou Settlement
Greatest area (sq. mi.)	156 Calgary	10 Whitecourt	2.0 Cochrane	2,840 Forty Mile No. 8	1,850 Willow Creek No. 26	41,200 No. 23	3.610 No. 2	534 Blood
Least	5,420 Drumheller	193 Irvine	47 Gadsby	3,230 Paintearth No. 18	896 Acadia No. 34	63 No. 13	2,100 No. 4	38 Sawridge
Greatest	438,000 Edmonton	11,200 St. Albert	1,240 Bellevue	21,900 Strathcona No. 20	15,900 Sturgeon No. 90	11,800 No. 17	3,300 No. 2	4,530 Blood
Mean density (persons per square mile) ⁽¹⁾	2,750	605	787	5.5	5.3	0.4	1.0	12.0
Mean area (sq. mi.)	35.5	3.2	0.3	1,230	1,010	7,340	2,620	55.4
Mean population	97,500	1,920	252	6,750	5,380	3,130	2,660	999
Total population	975,000	196,000	43,100	202,500	008'96	75,200	7,970	30,000
Number	10	102	167	30	18	24	6	45
Type of Area	Cities	Towns	Villages ⁽²⁾	Counties	Municipal Districts	Improvement Districts	Special Areas	Indian Reserves

Source: Statistics for Cities, Towns and Villages are from Statistics Canada; census taken June 1st, 1971.

Special area population statistics are from 1966 census.

Other statistics are from Department of Municipal Affairs as of January 1st, 1971.

Notes: (1) Density calculated by dividing total population in each category by total area in each category.

(2) Thirty-three summer villages are included for first five columns only.

SCHOOL BOARD AREAS

Type of Area	Number	Total Enrolment	Mean Enrolment	Greatest Enrolment	Least Enrolment
School Divisions	30	65,311	2,117	Yellowhead 4,994	Berry Creek 258
Counties	30	83,953	2,798	Parkland 5,340	Stettler 1,171
Public Districts (Urban)	23	193,382	8,408	Calgary 79,096	0
Catholic Separate Districts (Urban)	44	68,685	1,561	Edmonton 31,226	0
Public Districts (Rural)	22	6,448	293	Biggin Hill 2,532	0
Catholic Separate Districts (Rural)	43	1,259	29	Salisbury 1,099	0
Catholic Public Districts	1	628	-		-
Protestant Separate Districts	3	1,120	373	Glen Avon 628	0
Consolidated Districts	3	697	232	Falher 551	Lousana 52
Regional High School Districts	1	653	尼西	=	

Source: 66th Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Education 1971

Note: Areas with no enrolment either have no students or else send them to schools in other areas.

taxes), and had no relationship to municipal boundaries. Town or village school districts included adjacent rural territory of one or more rural municipalities.

By 1936 there were 3,771 school districts, despite some earlier attempts at consolidation. Because of the great financial, administrative and educational problems facing such small districts, legislation permitting the Department of Education to merge school districts into school divisions was passed in 1936 by the new government. Town and village school districts, as well as rural districts, could be included in school divisions.

Up to over 60 of the old school districts were formed into new divisions in the consolidation that took place over the next few years. Districts became advisory to the boards of the new school divisions.

In the early 1950's two further important changes were made in the school board structure. First, the County Act of 1950 provided for the establishment of local government units with responsibility for both school and rural municipal functions. Secondly, for two years, beginning in 1953, the Co-terminous Boundaries Commission set out to align all school division boundaries with those of municipal districts so that even if counties were not created there would be some alleviation of

the confusion arising over the collection of taxes by a number of municipal districts over-lapping a number of different school divisions.

As of March 1972, there were still 141 school districts with boards independent of school divisions or counties. Of these, however, 10 are public school districts of cities for which no legislative provision exists to amalgamate them with school divisions or counties, and 90 are separate school districts in cities, towns, villages and rural areas. This leaves only 41 public school districts which might be part of school divisions or counties but which, for one reason or another, are not. The great majority of these are in remote areas in the north or in the mountains, or else are associated with defense bases; three are consolidated or regional districts. In the end there remain only about a dozen school districts outside of school divisions or counties, for which no legislative or geographic reason can be found to explain their separate identity.

Effectually, then, Alberta's education system is governed through school divisions and counties.

It should be noted here that an important feautre of the Alberta school system is that there is provision for both separate schools and public schools. Depending upon whether Roman Catholics or others form the majority

of the population in a school division or district, the public school system is either Catholic or "Protestant". The minority group then has the privilege of establishing its own school district, though there is no provision in the School Act for separate school divisions. Where both school systems exist, Roman Catholics are taxed by the Catholic school system. whether this is public or separate, and others through the "Protestant" school system, unless they choose to support the Catholic system. Though there is only one Catholic public school district officially, three school divisions and two school districts may be considered to be "Catholic public" judging by the fact that "Protestant" separate districts have been formed in these areas. This provision for public and separate systems was determined by the Federal Government when Alberta was established as a Province in 1905, through Section 17 of the Alberta Act, in accord with Section 93 of the British North America Act.

COUNTIES

Traditionally in Canada schools have been administered by local governments elected separately from the municipalities. In 1950, Alberta broke away from this tradition with the enactment of the County Act, under which school divisions and municipal districts may be amalgamated into single purpose counties. Alberta is still the only province which provides for school and municipal functions being administered by a single council.

The county council administers municipal functions in the rural areas of the county while an education committee of the council replaces the school divisions.

To get around the problem that the same school division encompasses schools in towns and villages as well as in rural areas, while municipal districts, towns and villages each have their own separate municipal governments, the County Act provides that the county council school committee shall include representatives from the urban municipalities located within the county boundaries (summer villages excepted). As many towns or villages can be represented on this committee as there are county councillors and when the committee's estimates are reviewed by the county council, these same urban representatives may sit on council at that time. Where there are more urban municipalities within the county than there are county councillors (as is the. case in some counties), the urban representatives rotate among the urban municipalities.

Resistance to the establishment of counties was very strong at first, but today 30 municipal districts and their corresponding school divisions have formed themselves into counties.

Only one county (the present Municipal District of Sturgeon) has reverted to a separation of municipal district and school division.

Opinion on the merits of counties still is divided, but the success of the county system in rural areas (and for school purposes, in towns and villages) has been at least impressive enough to convince the Government of Alberta to enact the 1962 Municipal and School Administration Act. This allows the merging of a city or town municipal government with a public school district board to form what, in effect, is an "urban county" (though this term is not used in the Act). Today there are three "urban counties": Devon, Swan Hills and Grande Cache. It should be noted that these are all relatively new towns.

ADVANTAGES IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM

It is fair to say that Alberta has been among the most innovative provinces in developing its local government system. The continual consolidation of rural municipal districts, the consolidation into school divisions of rural, town and village school districts, the unique experiments in developing rural and urban counties, the establishment of co-terminous boundaries for school divisions and municipal districts, the Edmonton and Calgary annexations of adjacent urbanized land following the McNally Commission report in 1956, and the New Towns Act, together have placed the Province in the forefront in developing local government.

- i) As elsewhere in Canada, Alberta's local government system provides for different types of urban government and allows a centre to acquire more responsibility as it develops the capacity to do so. This is accomplished by establishing through the Municipal Government Act the categories of village, town and city, and through the New Towns Act which provides for the gradual development of local government in areas facing rapid urban growth.
- ii) Alberta's rural government units municipal districts, counties and school divisions are the largest rural municipal and school units in the country and have been now for almost thirty years. The units are generally considered small enough that people can identify with them, but large enough to be reasonably efficent in their provision of local services.
- iii) Thanks to the planning system and, in the case of Edmonton and Calgary, to the McNally Commission, urban governments generally include all urbanized land in each area. This has eliminated the problems caused by fragmentation of government among central

city and different suburbs. It might be noted, however, that there are important exceptions to this general rule, as, for instance, in the Crowsnest Pass area where a number of urban centres are cheek to jowl, or in the Edmonton area where important urbanized fringe areas are still outside the City's boundaries.

iv) Alberta's unique County Act (and its urban equivalent, the Municipal and School Administration Act) provides flexibility such that municipal governments and school boards anywhere in the Province may be either run separately or combined into a county. Proponents of counties point to the efficiencies which can be had through the avoidance of duplicated administrations, to the possibilities for coherent planning, and to the fact that municipal expenditures and school expenditures can be balanced against one another with the same councillors making a decision in both cases, councillors who can be held responsible for the total taxes in an area.

Despite these good points of the present system, it is still useful to review the local government system in Alberta, just as in the past it was necessary to do so from time to time. The reasons for review in the past included increasing cost of locally delivered public services, economic problems for rural areas, new technology (like buses and graders) requiring and allowing larger administrative units, problems of co-ordination among overlapping administrations, and rapidly growing cities and suburbs. To varying degrees these reasons for review still apply today and may be summed up, broadly speaking, as being related to increasing urbanization.

PROBLEMS

MUNICIPALITIES

Problems Stemming From The Categorization of Municipalities

— THE RURAL/URBAN DISTINC-TION: One of the chief problems with regard to the categorization of municipal units is the basic distinction which is made between rural units and urban units, a distinction found in local government systems across Canada.

The rural/urban distinction once reflected clear differences of lifestyle, workstyle and living environment. People in the country were either farmers or were otherwise engaged in primary resource exploitation, such as logging. People in the cities and towns either supplied services to rural people and other people in the cities, or, where manufacturing existed in Alberta, worked in industries. People lived quite near to where they worked — right on

the farm or in small relatively compact urban areas. There were many inter-relationships, of course, and many similarities in life between the two, but the differences were great enough at least for people to think in terms of urban local government providing certain kinds of services appropriate to dense development and rural government providing only certain necessary services for low-density areas — primarily roads.

Today people may live thirty or more miles out in the country and work in the city, or may live in a town and work in a rurally located industry. To a large degree the rural/urban dichotomy is meaningless in terms of work. Living styles have come closer together as well, with rural people demanding the same kinds of services afforded urban people and urban people seeking a rural environment for recreation for at least part of the week if not all the time.

Because of the rural/urban distinction among municipalities then, planning and accommodating urban growth becomes difficult. Growing cities must either annex land of neighbouring municipalities or see a disintegration in the government of the urban unit as autonomous suburbs spring up around them — a prospect very few people regard as desirable for the overall health of a city. The form of cities, then, becomes determined by the land which is easiest to annex from a political point of view, rather than on the basis of the most desirable configuration from an environmental, social or economic point of view. Great expense may be involved in annexation proceedings, and ensuing bitterness may hinder regional co-operation for years.

Furthermore, the rural/urban distinction may also lead to industries and residential developments locating so as to take the best advantage of taxation differences across municipal lines. A rural municipality beside a city may find itself with residential development expensive to service (even in terms of roads, schools and fire protection), yet without much assessment being derived from this development; or, it may find itself graced with an industry making it quite rich in comparison with the adjacent city in which most of the workers live and for whom the city must provide services. These problems are all fully discussed in the report of the McNally Commission and in the Hanson Report on Edmonton's boundaries. (6)

The boundary can also cause problems in the delivery of services. Certain urban services, such as libraries, are frequently used by rural people whose taxes do not support the service. Conversely, there are no programs to provide for regional parks in rural areas — parks to be largely paid for, and used by, urban people.

Services which must cross boundaries can only be developed after lengthy inter-jurisdictional consultation (witness, for example, the some one dozen water agreements between Edmonton and surrounding communities) and/or through the establishment of special purpose bodies (hospital districts, regional planning commissions, preventive social service areas, etc.). As will be discussed more fully in Part III of this paper, special purpose boards must spend time co-ordinating their efforts one among the other; they are only indirectly responsible to the electorate of the involved municipalities and create a confusing governmental situation which citizens find difficult to relate to. Such special purpose bodies are also inadequate for fostering general inter-municipal planning and administration. (Regional planning commissions are an exception, of course, and potentially they could do much to overcome some of these problems, but only by a strengthening of their regional planning commission structure itself, as discussed in the Task Force publication on this subject, and by taking on administrative and development responsibilities — responsibilities they were not designed to handle.)

The point here is not that the boundaries of urban units are too restrictive (as the McNally and Hanson reports suggest) but rather that the rural/urban distinction itself may be problematic as the basis for establishing municipalities.

— CLASSIFICATION OF CITIES: Even within both urban and rural categories, the fact that there are such wide differences among municipalities as regard to population, wealth or type of economic base can be a problem. Most particularly is the question of whether a city of half a million people can be classified in the same way as cities of under 50,000. Not only is the scale of problems different in the larger cities, but so are the kinds of problems. For instance, rapid transit is a consideration for improving the transportation system only in the two big cities of Alberta.

Perhaps it was a mistake to abolish the city charter concept in 1951. Though elements of certain cities' charters were taken into account in the general legislation which replaced the charters, the degree to which cities can vary their government was minimized. It would seem to be at least as important to distinguish the two metropolitan centres in the Province from the smaller cities as to distinguish towns and villages from cities.

Problems Stemming From The Size of Municipalities

Regardless of whether we are talking about rural or urban municipalities in Alberta today. in many cases there are problems owing to the small size of the municipal population. This can cause inefficiencies in the delivery of services because for many types of activities proper economies of scale cannot be provided. Thus certain services either must cost more in smaller centres than they would in larger centres or else they are not provided. On the other hand, certain services may be duplicated among a number of neighbouring municipalities, when such duplication is not required for reasons of population alone, because municipalities separately apply pressure to get the service from senior governments, or because each municipality feels it has to provide the service in the absence of acceptable cooperative arrangements.

For instance, airports developed by the Federal Ministry of Transport may be located so that they do not adequately serve the whole region, being too close to the community originally requesting the service. Attempts to get regional libraries going have been difficult. Such libraries, with possibly rotating book stocks and one good central reference library, would improve service to all for the same budget.

Secondly, small municipalities cannot afford the time and help required to fully investigate what government programs are available to them and which private enterprises might reasonably be expected to locate in their area. They tend to lack the resources to present their cases in the event of a dispute with a senior level of government, with the railways, with utilities, etc. They may not take advantage of cost-sharing programs because they do not find out about them or because they cannot afford the administrative work required to take advantage of them.

Thirdly, among small municipalities there is competition for revenue-producing assessment, not only because there are rural/urban distinctions but because there are perhaps 25 or more municipalities in one urban region each competing for industry. Even though the whole area may gain in terms of employment and business, only one municipality will gain the assessment. This has many negative consequences such as the fact that the industry may not be finally located where it is environmentally most sound, or most sound in terms of the region's transportation needs. While the Municipal Government Act (Section 426) forbids bonusing, i.e. municipalities competing in giveaway programs to industry, they may spend duplicative and competitive efforts in convincing industry of their individual municipality's attractions.

Regional planning generally becomes difficult because municipal boundaries divide not only decision-making units but fiscal units as well. As the Calgary General Plan states:

"... it is pertinent to examine the fundamental force dividing political objectives, namely the tax system. The rivalry for additional means of tax revenue is real and will continue as long as property tax remains the primary source for financing most local government functions. The tax system could be said to account for many planning decisions, including the persistent desire of surrounding municipal districts to become urbanized."

Inequities in the quality of services provided residents of adjacent municipalities often arise due to discrepancies in relative assessment resources and relative responsibilities for providing services. An industry may be benefiting the municipality in which it is located, through assessment, but may be making things difficult for a nearby municipality in which a number of workers live. The dormitory municipality must provide services to these workers and their families, but does not gain assessment from the industry.

Fourth, smaller units also have fiscal problems related to the hazardousness of their growth. Between 1961 and 1966, 60% of all urban municipalities with less than 500 population declined in population, as did 33% of all urban municipalities with 500 to 3,000 population. Budgeting for capital improvements and paying them off can thus be particularly difficult for small urban municipalities and this causes problems in terms of the quality of services delivered or alternatively in terms of their high cost.

Fifth, because many local services are delivered to an area larger than one municipality, regional co-operation bodies must be set up ad hoc for each service and the same kinds of problems arise as discussed above with regard to special-purpose bodies providing services to an urban centre and the surrounding rural region.

Sixth, smaller communities may find it difficult to fund and/or obtain good elected, professional and volunteer staff to run all facets of the municipality. This has been expressed in some places as: "We're over-organized", meaning that those people who do play leadership roles sit on a large number of boards, etc.

On the other hand, a number of problems can be identified as stemming from the fact that some places of very great population are under one local government. Edmonton and Calgary may be too big for meaningful citizen involvement in local government whether that is through the school boards or city council. It is certainly the case that residents of these two cities are less acquainted with their elected representatives. Thus, in these larger cities many of the advantages of local government are lost.

SCHOOL BOARDS

While one recent report urges further consolidation of school systems from the present 60 public school divisions and some 141 school districts to about 20 divisions, (7) it should be noted that generally speaking the school system is already more consolidated than the municipal system. A school division includes not only the rural area of a county or municipal district, but most towns and villages within this area as well. While school districts are much smaller, there are fewer of these every year. Nevertheless, certain divisions and a number of the districts — particularly in the less populated parts of the province — might be too small to support a full range of educational services and to achieve economies of scale in administering these services. On the other hand, in the two largest cities, the school boards may be too big to be in effective close touch with the citizens.

In terms of categories of school boards, the basic distinction between school divisions and school districts is rather straight forward. What appears to be more problematic is the separate school question. It is one that really goes beyond the issue of local government as such, but from the standpoint of local government alone the separate school fact reduces the options available for restructuring of local government. It limits the degree to which counties can be formed (either in urban or rural areas) and it virtually precludes the possibility of school boards taking over broader functions such as recreation, libraries, day care, or preventive social services — i.e. those functions which are closely related to education or which may be seen to be part of the education function itself. To a large extent these functions must be delivered to the whole public, it being inefficient to separate Catholics from Protestants in making use of a reference library, for instance.

While from the point of view of efficiency alone the existence of separate school districts can increase the cost of equivalent education for both separate and public school supporters, there are other important considerations here in addition to efficiency — such as choice in the type of education one's children receive. Some people have asked, however, whether the

Catholic/Protestant distinction is the most meaningful from the point of view of freedom of choice. Perhaps a number of systems should be possible, or else within one system there should be a wide range of choices.

COUNTIES

Implementation of the county system is problematic in an area which includes separate school districts (whether these are Protestant or Catholic). Because county municipal councillors and public school trustees are the same people, separate school supporters must either enjoy representation without taxation in electing the public school trustees or else be disenfranchized from electing municipal councillors. Where counties have been created so as to include areas with separate school districts, the choice has been to give a "double franchise" to separate school supporters, i.e. they are allowed to vote for municipal councillors, even though this also means they are voting for public school trustees. Separate school supporters in 12 towns, 3 villages and a number of rural areas find themselves in this peculiar position because their separate school districts are within county areas.

It seems fair to say that while the "urban county" is less complicated than the rural county (which must provide representation from urban municipalities on the school committee), it has not proven to be as popular a structure. Three reasons have been advanced for this. First, all cities in the Province, and 32 of the 45 towns with independent public school districts, are also separate school districts; and, for the reasons mentioned earlier, it is difficult if not impossible to form a county in such a situation. Secondly, one of the chief co-ordination problems leading to the formation of counties in rural areas is between road construction and maintenance (handled by municipal authorities) and school vanning (handled by school authorities) — a problem which does not occur in urban areas. Thirdly, given the present limited composition of school boards and councils, neither trustees nor councillors (especially in the bigger centres) are inclined to take on the extra work which the county system would entail.

Yet, it must be emphasized, in rural areas at least, the county system is now predominant and need no longer be regarded as experimental but rather as one of Alberta's local government institutions.

ALTERNATIVES

ABOLITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government could be abolished in places where it now exists except for large or well-established units — perhaps, even, every-

where. There are few proponents of this kind of approach. Most people believe local government to be good for reasons of efficiency, responsiveness, and even as protection of liberty. But this means that local government really must be efficient and responsive to have any real purpose.

DECENTRALIZATION

Few would suggest that any of the present municipalities should be split up into more autonomous units, even in the cases of Edmonton and Calgary where some thought is being given to decentralizing government within the one city. (See Part Three of this pamphlet.) As it is, it may be debated whether urban municipalities cover complete economic and social units. Rural municipalities, which saw major consolidation in 1941 (though the boundaries were, in many cases, modified during the middle 1950's as a result of the Coterminous Boundaries Commission), are generally regarded as in sounder shape than the previous smaller units. Even now the mean population of rural municipalities is only 6,230, and 94% of them are declining in population.

The idea of returning to school districts, on the other hand, may be enjoying some favour, at least in the sense of decentralizing the schools themselves — centralization of schools often being regarded as one of the crushing blows to smaller centres. The schools are, in many rural centres, regarded as a social centre as well as an education centre, and are, moreover, often an attraction for shopping when parents come to visit the schools. It should be noted, however, that very few towns and villages of, say, a few hundred population or more, have lost their elementary schools. In any event, consolidation of school boards need not imply centralizing the location of schools.

SCHOOLS.

CONSOLIDATION

There is an increasing amount of interest in further consolidation of school and municipal governments. It has been noted that local school systems are already more consolidated, generally speaking, than municipalities. Should further consolidation of school divisions take place it will likely be in conjunction with further consolidations of municipalities into regional governments of one kind or another, the benefits of co-terminous boundaries for school and municipal governments now being apparent. More immediately, however, certain smaller public school districts may be brought into the fold of present school divisions.

In order to discuss the pros and cons of municipal consolidation one must be clear as

to whether one is discussing consolidation into larger single tier municipalities, (for instance by increasing once again the area of municipal districts and counties, and decreasing the number, or by urging village, town or possibly even city governments to merge with those of the surrounding rural areas); or, is one talking about consolidation into two-tier regional governments in which present or newly defined municipalities retain their identity and carry out certain functions while much larger regional authorities carry out other functions, presumably those which are more efficiently or more logically carried out over a larger area. The tendency in other provinces has been to move toward two-tier regional government.

The advantages of regional government in Alberta would be that local government could be exercised through units large enough to achieve economies of scale in the provision of services, units within which assessment could be shared to the benefit of regional development and sound environmental, economic and social planning in the region, in which competition for industrial assessment would be reduced if not forgotten altogether, in which all would benefit from the employment generated by new industries, in which inequities arising from differential assessments would be reduced, within which fiscal problems would be easier to control, and within which service would be logically distributed on the basis of the nature of the service rather than according to political boundaries.

Local government regions could also be the basis for provincial and perhaps even federal regional districts, several being combined if necessary for senior government purposes. If the regions were urban centred as they are in Ontario and Quebec (and to a large extent in B.C.), then close inter-relationships between city and countryside would be manifested in political, planning and administrative structures. In growing areas cities could be planned in ways other than continuous peripheral expansion if this was regarded as desirable, with no fear for fragmentation of control, imbalances in assessment or lengthy hassles over annexations. The need for special-purpose boards for various regional services would be obviated along with all the problems attending these in terms of lack of direct governmental control and lack of coherent determination of spending priorities for the region.

While it may be said that regional government increases complexity by introducing a fourth level of government, it must also be noted that there are a number of functions carried out regionally now and that one re-

gional administration of some kind would actually reduce complexity by decreasing the present number of regional administrations, each of which covers a different area.

Two major problems are involved in the creation of regions. The first is identifying boundaries — particularly if one is concerned with some kind of consistency of size so that each region may have approximately equal powers. Because of the varying densities in the Province from very high in Edmonton and Calgary regions to low in the east-central portion, not to mention the areas which are scarcely inhabited at all, regions cannot both be of equal area and equal population. With urban centred regions there is a problem that the centres would vary greatly in population and therefore in character. Furthermore, urban centred regions may not reflect other unifying characteristics in a region such as type of economic activity, historical identification of community or important ecological features such as river valleys, etc. In some areas it may be difficult to determine what should be the dominant urban centre, as in north-eastern Alberta, for example.

In general the Province is just not neatly divided into urban-centred or other kinds of regions. There are problems of overlap, of irregular or vaguely defined boundaries, of differing degrees of the particular attribute being considered. (8)

The second problem with regional government is that there is a reduction in the closeness of government to the people, in the very local control. Related to this is the possible psychological problem of loss of community identity and the political problems involved in setting up a region, in getting people and local politicians to relinquish present powers. But this problem is reduced with a two-tier system in which all present municipalities, or selected strong ones, or amalgamated ones, retain certain functions. Indeed, it has been suggested that in some cases sub-units of regional government might have to be smaller than existing units, e.g. in the large cities. This would allow local government to be equally close to the people whether it was in a large city or in a small village, while still achieving the advantages of regional government.

The trick is, of course, to establish usefully the relationship between the two tiers in terms of division of powers and in terms of who appoints or elects whom. The regional government could appoint local committees from its own members, (as in the Winnipeg metropolitan area), or the local governments could send representatives to form the regional govern-

ment (as, in effect, is the case in B.C.), or the electorate could elect both local and regional governments independently (as for the most part, is the case in the Niagara region of Ontario).

Perhaps the answer to the boundaries question could vary from area to area, though it seems preferable to start with a plan — say, urban-centred regions with potential commuter radius of some sixty miles or so—as the initial starting point from which modifications could be made locally as people saw fit.

British Columbia divided the whole Province into regions and then left it to each region to develop on its own to a large extent. Ontario is developing region by region with very clearly defined powers allocated between regions and municipalities, and by amalgamating municipalities as it forms some regions. Quebec is proceeding region by region but is altering municipal boundaries under a different program. In these three largest and most urbanized provinces, regional government of some kind is now a fact. (9) Would it be useful for Alberta?

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CATEGORIES

More categories of government could be set up, particularly for instance by establishing a new category of "Metropolis" for Edmonton and Calgary, perhaps each having their own Act as previously was the case in Alberta. Winnipeg in Manitoba has its own Act, as do regions in Ontario and Quebec.

If regional government or districts are established, then thought might be given to special legislation for each, or for various categories. The advantages would be that the important differences among municipalities or regions would not have to be reduced to a common denominator.

On the other hand, there could be concern about the absence of some kinds of objective criteria for certain places having more autonomy than others. This could be resolved by having different classes of regions based on size, economic base, degree of urban-centredness, etc.

In a sense, there is a precedent for this already in Alberta: existing legislation provides for one of the most important distinctions among urban municipalities — between established centres and rapidly growing new towns which need extra provincial help to finance their expansion.

POWERS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND FINANCES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

THE PRESENT SYSTEM

Unlike the relationship between the provinces and Federal Government, there is no constitutional definition as to what powers, responsibilities and financial rights should be those of municipalities and local school boards as opposed to those of the Province. The British North America Act provides that municipal institutions (Section 92) and education (Section 93) should be the responsibility of the provinces. How each province distributes powers to local municipalities and school districts is up to it (though under Section 93 the rights of separate school supporters are constitutionally protected).

In Alberta, the Municipal Government Act and the School Act respectively indicate what councils and school boards shall and shall not do (the limitation of responsibilities) and may and may not do (the limitation of powers), but there is no clear written document as to how functions shall be distributed between the Province and the various local governments in the way that functions are distributed between provinces and the Federal Government through the British North America Act. Furthermore, there is no suggestion in the provincial legislation that matters which the local governments shall or may undertake are not also the responsibility of the Province.

Besides the Municipal Government Act and the Schools Act, there is a host of Acts assigning responsibilities to municipalities and school boards (the Libraries Act, Planning Act, Police Act, Public Health Act, School Buildings Act, Noxious Weeds Act, etc.), and numerous Acts which empower local government to take on responsibilities (the Preventive Social Services Act, the Recreation Development Act, Alberta Housing Act, etc.).

Because of various pieces of legislation defining the powers and responsibilities of local government, it would be a research project in itself to clearly define just what these are at any given point in time. A municipal government is especially affected by a large number of Alberta statutes. Essentially, the school board of trustees administers a school operation subject to regulations (e.g. on curriculum, hiring practices, etc.) of the Department of Education, and develops and maintains school

buildings and other facilities. When borrowing funds from the School Foundation Program Fund for building facilities, school boards must get the approval of the School Building Board as established under the School Buildings Act.

Municipal responsibilities include responsibility for some aspect of virtually every area of governmental activity in a local area from provision of basic utilities to provision of social services, to ensuring public health, to protection of life and property, to provision of recreation services, to municipal planning, to collection of taxes of municipal government and school boards, to provision of appeal bodies on planning decisions and utilities. The line between provincial responsibility and local responsibility in all these areas is one which is determined by separate Acts and separate departments independently. As a result of the fact that many different Acts (and hence, many different provincial departments) all impinge on municipal government, municipalities must relate to a number of different provincial agencies and requirements separately. Despite the existence of the Department of Municipal Affairs, decisions can be taken by virtually every other department that have a tremendous impact on the development and affairs of a municipality.(10)

The chief source of revenue for both municipalities and school boards is the property tax. În addition, municipalities can obtain income from business taxes, utility profits, and fines. It has been the case that neither municipalities nor school boards have found these local sources to be adequate for providing the services which society today demands. While it could be required of municipalities and school boards that they either raise taxes or cut services, the Province, and to a certain extent the Federal Government, have agreed that the responsibilities of local governments are large in proportion to their taxation base, and accordingly the tendency has been in recent years for senior levels of government to provide increasing amounts of money to local governments. Senior level aid to local government has come in five categories:

Grants in lieu of taxes

Since Provincial or Federal Government property is exempt from municipal or local

taxation the senior governments now, as a matter of course, provide grants equivalent to what the property tax on certain of their properties would be.

Ear-Marked grants

In order to encourage local governments to carry out certain programs, various grants are provided by both Provincial and Federal Governments. Examples of shared-cost programs include highways, hospitals, recreation, libraries, preventive social services, etc. Under these programs, funds are available to municipalities only for specific purposes.

Equalization Plans

Since it happens that in certain areas there is a great deal of assessable property relative to the population, and in others less, the Province has taken steps to ensure that a minimum standard of services is available throughout the Province. The School Foundation Program is a most notable step in this regard whereby thirty mills (1971) are placed into a common fund by all municipalities. The fund is then distributed according to a formula to school systems throughout the Province. Other equalization plans include the Alberta Planning Fund and funds for recreation, etc. The Province in all cases supplements these funds thereby serving two purposes in one program —equalization and provincial subsidy. (11)

Indirect subsidies

Under the Homeowners Tax Discount Act, every Alberta homeowner receives a grant equal to whichever is less, his property tax or \$75.00 (\$150.00 if an old age pensioner in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement). In effect, this allows local governments to more easily boost the property tax. As an option homeowners aged sixty-five years or older may now, under the Senior Citizens Shelter Assistance Act, elect to take a tax refund in the amount of the School Foundation tax (30 mills).

Senior level governments can give grants with no strings attached

This is a relatively rare procedure as he who pays the piper usually likes to call the tune.

The Provincial Government's grants to municipalities of one-third of all oil and gas royalties collected the previous year is one of the few examples of this kind of grant. Under the Municipalities Assistance Act, a little over four hundred million dollars have been distributed to municipalities since 1951. The grants have been made according to a formula whereby municipalities receive more the larger their population, the lower their population density, and the lower their assessment base. In 1971, the figure was pegged at \$38,000,000 and then

revised slightly upwards such that no municipality received less per capita than they had in 1970. In 1972, \$42,000,000 is to be distributed from this fund, though it is quite possible that the program will then be discontinued.

Federal Government contributions have been restricted to grants for special purposes, grants in lieu of taxes on federal property in municipalities, and to equalization plans (like the Alberta Hospitalization Benefits Plan) once these have been set up. No general grants or indirect subsidies have been given, as from the Province, because constitutional responsibility for municipalities and for the general provision of education services lie with the provinces. Increasing pressures from urban governments, however, are directed toward finding means to achieve such general federal aid.

ADVANTAGES IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM

The present system, both in terms of distribution of powers and responsibilities, and in terms of distribution of financial resources, is a compromise, or perhaps better said, a series of compromises. On the one hand there are the demands for equality in the delivery of services across the Province and for responsible delivery by local authorities of those services; on the other hand, there are demands for local flexibility and initiative.

Provincial controls and requirements are instituted whenever it is felt that an inadequate amount of attention is being given to a certain service in some localities. Unfortunately, this usually means regulations binding all munici-

palities.

Various financial aids given by the Province to local governments represent an attempt to ensure that a certain level of service is provided uniformly throughout the Province and that local governments are relieved somewhat of financial responsibilities for these services.

Despite the various controls, requirements, financial incentives and responsibilities imposed on the local governments, there is a fair amount of room for local areas to develop as they see fit.

PROBLEMS

DEFINITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The fact that there is no coherent definition of local government powers and responsibilities, such that one department and/or one Act encompasses them all, makes for a very complicated system. It becomes exceedingly difficult for local governments to plan effectively if they

have to worry about a score of government departments, plans, regulations and budgets. It becomes difficult even for full time staff in local government to keep the system clear and make decisions intelligently within the system, let alone elected officials who have less time and who are more temporary than their staffs.

Many municipalities, particularly smaller ones, find it difficult to take advantage of special programs which vary for each of the departments established. All municipalities face the situation of being responsible to a number of different bosses—to the Attorney General in establishing a Police Commission, to the Provincial Board of Health (through the local board of health or health unit) on health matters, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for various aspects of municipal administration, to the Minister of the Environment for environmental measures, to the Local Authorities Board when borrowing money, to the Provincial Planning Board when dealing with subdivisions, etc.

Not only are legislated and regulated requirements on municipalities scattered among a number of different Provincial Acts and authorities, but in each case they may be extensive and detailed. The Municipal Government Act alone contains 431 sections, and runs through 176 pages. Included in it are requirements for municipalities with regard to such matters as curfew hours, weather control, coats of arms, etc. Is such detailed control necessary?

METHODS OF FINANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It is recognized that the property tax is one of the most regressive taxes that can be imposed. The low income property owner is taxed proportionately higher in terms of his income than the high income owner. The property tax is rather similar to the sales tax in this high degree of regressivity.

On the basis of this fact and the fact that senior levels of government have wider, more productive and more stable taxation bases (the income tax, resource royalties and liquor profits, as well as fines, fees and utility profits), most people who have investigated the matter seem to agree that there is a discrepancy between responsibilities which the municipalities have been handed, or have assumed, and their financial resources. For instance, the Cities of Alberta, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Public and Separate School Boards in each city presented the Provincial Government with the report of a study entitled "Urban Crisis". It was suggested that the study "proves the need for a complete realignment of fiscal policies vis-a-vis Provincial-Municipal relationships. We not only stress the necessity of further aid to municipalities but suggest an obligation because of the broader tax base available to the Provincial Government. We strongly suggest that there is an urban crisis in many areas of municipal operations, but most important is the lack of financial resources available to the municipality."(12)

The difficulty local governments face in financing completely local operations leaves the Province (or Federal Government) giving grants in various forms to the local governments. The problem with senior level contributions to local government has been that grants, in whatever forms they are given, are always subject to the senior level of government determining the importance of such grants within their own priorities. Even when grants are legislated, as under The Municipalities Assistance Act, it is a relatively easy thing for a government to change the legislation as was done in Alberta. Such changes can mean difficulties for a local government, not only in terms of the amount of money available but in terms of its ability to budget intelligently and to project potential income in future years. Furthermore, the great bulk of grants to local governments are "ear-marked", (i.e. given only for certain purposes). This takes away from one of the chief benefits of local government: the autonomy of local government to determine local priorities.

Sometimes the Province (or the Federal Government) helps out by assuming joint responsibility for certain services. In the area of hospitals, education and in welfare the Province has assumed increasing financial responsibility through the years. In terms of physical development, such matters as highway construction through municipalities, sewer systems, etc., have been aided by the Province. Such joint financing also leads to joint control and responsibility and often this can be the cause of much difficulty and confusion. Thus, time is spent co-ordinating activities among governments as each works out its own priorities. Joint control is often regarded as being undesirable for these reasons.

The problem with indirect grants such as the Homeowner's Tax Discount and the Senior Citizens Homeowner Assistance Grant lies in their administration which is more cumbersome than are straight grants to local governments. Also they can be insensitive instruments in distinguishing homeowners who need help most from those who can well afford higher taxes; and they favour homeowners over renters. (13) On the other hand, they allow the Province to give relief to homeowners without reducing taxes on industrial and commercial property.

ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVES FOR REDISTRIBUTING POWERS

In effect the choices are between increasing local autonomy or reducing it. As Canada's cities grow larger there is a tendency in some quarters to suggest that the larger cities at least should not be subject to the control of the provinces, that the British North America Act should be changed to give the cities powers at least equal to the provinces' in relation to the Federal Government. It is frequently noted, for example, that the metropolitan areas of Toronto and Montreal contain more people than every province but their own, or that Edmonton and Calgary are four to five times as big as Prince Edward Island and probably will soon be bigger than the other Atlantic Provinces. There seems only a slim possibility however, that the creation of such city-states will come about, if only because the provinces would be loath to see such a drastic diminution of their powers. More objectively it might be suggested that the close inter-relationship between urban and rural is such that making cities independent of their hinterlands would be a step in the wrong direction, and that actually closer administrative ties between rural and urban must be developed.

Another possibility would be for a Bill of Rights to be drawn up on a federal level guaranteeing certain powers for certain types of local governments. In effect, this would involve the Federal Government responsibility in municipal affairs and/or in the education system. Such a by-passing of the provinces seems re-

mote.

In terms of provincial powers, the alternatives for change are either an increase or a decrease in these efffectively (as opposed to constitutionally) over local government: an increase in provincial powers over local governments should lead to increased equality among municipalities or school boards in the level of service they provide and should ensure responsibility in carrying out these services; a decrease in provincial power should lead to more individuality.

Perhaps instead of ensuring that local governments operate in the best interests of the citizens by establishing controls from above at the provincial level, these might be reduced and replaced with legislation providing for citizen input to, and control over local elected bodies from below. This alternative is discussed

in Part Three of this pamphlet.

ALTERNATIVES FOR FINANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Increasing Local Government Revenue

Local governments could tax more on the

basis of their present taxation sources. First, there could be an across the board increase in property taxes—that is, an increase in the mill rate—and/or, certain properties presently exempt from taxation (educational, health and religious properties, farm buildings and crops, pollution control equipment and other items under provincial legislation; certain properties of the Canadian Pacific Railway, of the Federal Government, etc., under Federal legislation) could be taxed. The latter option would broaden the tax base of municipalities, though at the expense of the presently exempt owners or of the government supporting them.

The biggest problem with general increases in the mill rate is that they prove onerous for lower income homeowners. The property tax is generally considered to be one of the most regressive taxes in that it hits those with lower incomes proportionately harder than the rich. This was borne out by a City of Calgary Planning Department study in 1966, which showed that home-owning families making less than \$2,000 per year, spent 13.1% of their income in property taxes, this percentage reducing through income groups such that in the \$15,000 and over category only 2.8% of the income was paid out in property taxes. (14)

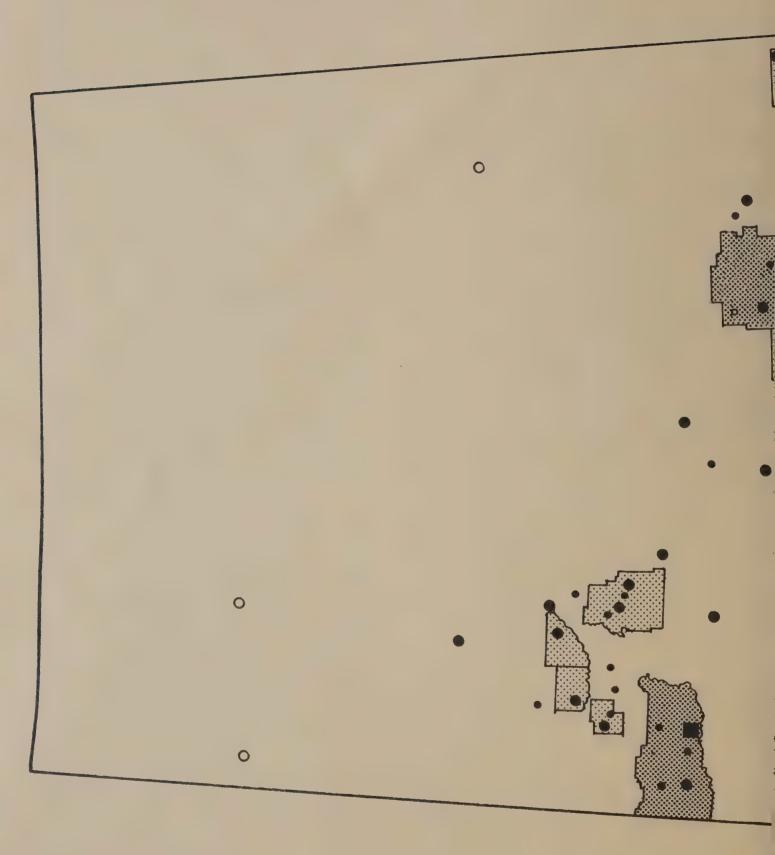
As the A.U.M.A. brief pointed out, other problems with the property tax are: (1) it punishes owners who improve their property and rewards those who build poor buildings or who allow them to decay; (2) the property tax is often cumbersome because of (often arbitrary) assessment valuations which must be made; (3) the property tax tends to aggravate housing shortages by increasing the cost of an investment in housing; (4) property taxes are not appropriate for supporting essentially non-local functions, such as health, welfare, and perhaps even education.

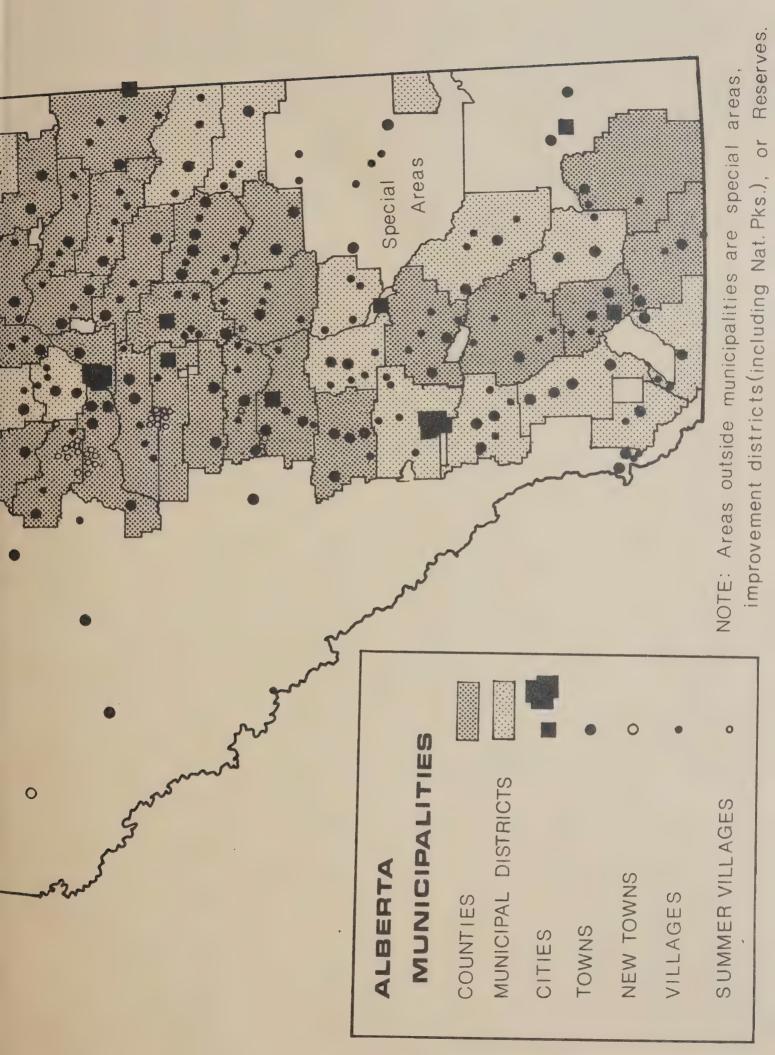
Secondly, municipalities can increase business taxes or impose supplementary business taxes (usually business taxes are based on the rental value of property and buildings over and above the property tax paid by the owner). Traditionally, a relatively small amount has

been collected in this way.

Other sources of local income—utility rates, fees and fines,—do not seem to be particularly promising either. The utility tax (or increased rates if municipally owned) is found to be about as regressive as the property tax, for the same reasons.

Other taxes which might be imposed at the local level were considered in the A.U.M.A. Study and all were found to have shortcomings. One is usually brought to the point of suggesting that increasing revenue for local governments must come from those sources taxed by the Provincial and Federal Governments: cor-





porate and personal income tax, resource revenues, etc. Thus, in terms of increasing local government revenue there is a growing tendency to look toward the senior governments for sources of funds.

The provision of funds by senior levels of governments also can be used as an equalizing function among different areas. Equalization is important because if poorer municipalities are left on their own, their need to increase taxes to provide better services, or their reluctance to increase taxes, might drive businesses and individuals to locate elsewhere, the assessment base will thus further decrease, and this in turn will require higher taxes, more relocation and so on.

A number of difficulties associated with aid from senior levels of government have been noted, but one possibility for improving the situation might be for the Province to assign a proportion of all income tax collected, or indeed of all taxes collected, to be distributed to local governments. A sustained program such as the Municipalities Assistance Act has provided, but on a still larger scale, would do much to relieve the present situation. Still, as recent events have shown, the Province, because it does have ultimate responsibility for local government, could at any time, reduce their grants. The Federal Government could provide general aid as well if only by returning money to the provinces on the understanding that this would be used for municipal purposes. However, even this might be a rather sensitive constitutional point with the provinces as it might be seen to lead to more direct Federal involvement in local affairs. It is understandable, then, why increasingly municipal leaders, especially from the big cities, have been calling for some constitutional guarantees for urban financing.

Finally, it might be worth asking whether the property tax could be totally replaced (except for local improvements such as lane pavings, etc.) by local governments getting a certain portion of the income tax. This could be worked the same way that the provinces individually tax a percentage of income tax collected by the Federal Government. A percentage could be charged by each municipality separately according to its own needs and preferences.

Decreasing Local Government Responsibilities

The local governments could reduce services, of course, but this would seem to be a rather undesirable approach. The most direct services that are provided to citizens are, for the most part, provided by local government. While some services might be more logically, that is efficiently and equitably, taken over by the Province, others would seem to be best undertaken locally for reasons of efficiency and responsiveness. If services were to be curtailed altogether it would seem that we would be losing a good deal of our quality of life. As the A.U.M.A. brief suggested, the costs of local government are: "moderate in comparison with the cost of hiring a guard to protect one's belongings even on a part-time basis, of hiring a tutor to instruct one's children, of providing one's own water and sanitation system, as well as the inconvenience of having no paved streets, no public parks, public libraries, or other public facilities."(15)

It might be appropriate, however, for the Province to take over certain of those services which it funds the better part of now, and which are under the joint control of the municipalities and the Province. This would include health, hospitals, environmental control, etc. Other functions which are at present jointly funded and controlled by local and Provincial authorities, are such that local control can still be useful and effective. In fields such as education many of the decisions to be made are not technical in the same way as decisions in running a hospital might be, for instance, and the service is reasonably local in the clientele served.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

The following discussion on local government organization will be concerned with the inter-relationships among elected bodies, special purpose boards, and citizens in any given local area. Local government organization will be considered in terms of its efficiency, and of its responsiveness to the citizens in providing services and facilities.

ORGANIZATION OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, SCHOOL BOARDS, AND COUNTIES

The municipal, school and county government components of the total local government system have already been discussed in terms of how, where, and to what purpose they are established and with what powers, responsibilities and financial resources. In this part of the pamphlet local governments will be considered in terms of their relationship to citizens — how they are elected (composition) and how, once elected, they are subject to citizens' controls and inputs.

MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Composition

The composition of municipal councils is established by Part 3 of the Municipal Government Act. Under Section 25, "except as otherwise provided in this Act:

(a) the council of a municipal district shall consist of the same number of councillors as there are electoral divisions, one of

whom shall be reeve:

(b) the council of a summer village shall consist of three councillors, one of whom shall be mayor;

(c) the council of a village

(i) shall consist of three councillors, or

(ii) if the council of a village having a population of at least 500 persons so authorizes, by by-law, shall consist of five councillors, one of whom shall be mayor;

(d) the council of a town shall consist of a mayor and six councillors;

(e) the council of a city shall consist of a mayor and

(i) six councillors, or

(ii) such greater even number of councillors, not exceeding 20, as the council, after the first election in the city, authorizes by by-law."(16)

The important differences among municipalities with regard to council composition

then, are that towns and cities elect the mayor directly and independently of councillors, while in villages, summer villages and municipal districts, the mayor or reeve is a chairman elected by and from among the councillors. As well, the higher the status of an urban municipality, the more councillors it may have.

Under Section 26, "A council of a city

(a) may, of its own motion, or

(b) shall, on receipt of a petition signed by such number of electors as represent at least 2 per cent of the population, submit to a vote of the electors a proposal to have councillors elected by wards."

Then, under Section 27, "The council shall

(a) divide the city into not less than three nor more than 10 areas, to be known as wards, in such a manner that the number of electors residing in each ward is substantially equal, and

(b) specify the number of councillors, being not less than two, to be elected to repre-

sent each ward."

Under Section 28, provision exists for abolishing wards in the city once established. Edmonton (with 4 wards) and Calgary (with 6 wards) are the only two cities which have adopted the ward system.

Municipal councillors and mayors, other than in summer villages, are elected for threeyear terms. In summer villages, the term is one year.

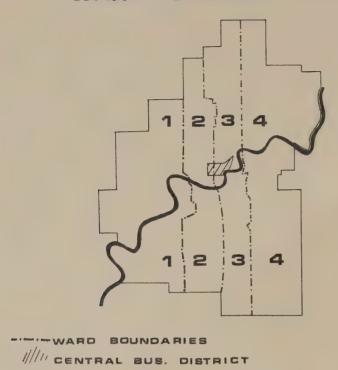
Citizen Controls and Inputs

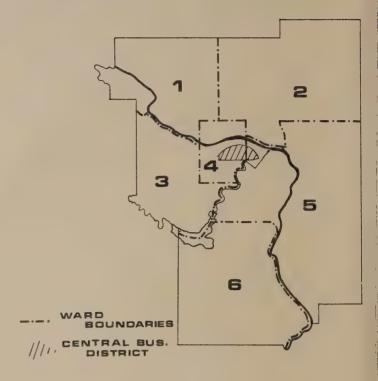
Except as decided by the council, all its meetings are to be held openly. At closed meetings no by-laws or resolutions may be passed. Public meetings in a municipality are provided for by Section 126 (as recently amended) of the Municipal Government Act, "... the mayor, by public notice conspicuously posted in at least 10 widely separated places in the municipality, shall call a public meeting of the electors of the municipality to be held on the date named in the notice, for the discussion of municipal affairs or of any matter relating thereto," if he has received a petition of the electors signed by at least

- "(a) 5 per cent of the electors in a municipality having a population of 10,000 or more persons, or
- (b) 10 per cent of the electors in a municipality having a population of less than 10,000 persons but more than 1,000 persons, or

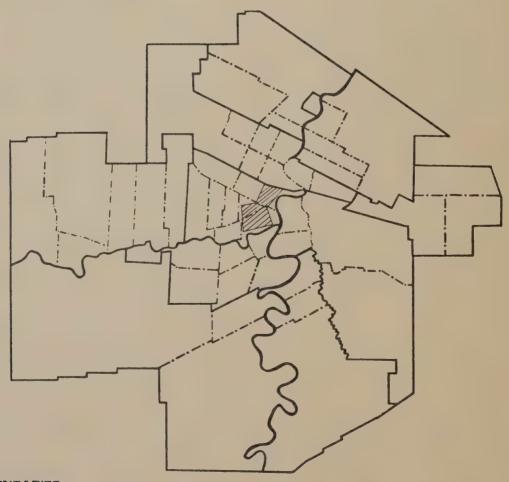
EDMONTON WARD SYSTEM

CALGARY WARD SYSTEM





WINNIPEG WARD SYSTEM



---- WARD BOUNDARIES

/// CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

--- COMMUNITY CTTEE, BOUNDARIES

(c) 15 per cent of the electors in a municipality having a population of 1,000 persons or less."

Under Section 149 of the Municipal Government Act,

"(1) Any elector may at all reasonable

times inspect

(a) any contract approved by council or an executive committee and any by-law or account after it has been submitted to the council.

(b) any report of the commissioners or of any committee or of any official of the municipality after it has been submitted to the council, other than an opinion or report of the municipal solicitor or of any counsel engaged by the municipality, and

(c) the minutes of council, after they have

been adopted by the council.

(2) Any elector may at all reasonable times inspect any audited report or abstract thereof, and may by himself or his agent and at his own expense take a copy thereof or extracts therefrom."

Under Section 148,

"(1) A council by by-law may provide for publication of the minutes of its meetings and of information concerning other municipal subjects and for that purpose may cause circulars to be prepared and distributed to all proprietary electors.

(2) Where one or more weekly newspapers are in circulation in a municipality the council by by-law may provide for the publication of the matters referred to in subsection (1) in such newspapers, and for the distribution of a copy thereof to each proprietary elector."

Furthermore, under Section 416

"(1) If one-third of the members of the council, or one-fourth of the proprietary electors of the municipality, petition the Lieutenant Governor in Council for a commission to issue under the Great Seal to inquire into the financial affairs of the municipality, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may issue a commission accordingly." (17)

In summer villages, "an annual meeting for the discussion of village affairs shall be held in the summer village on the third Saturday in

July." (Section 10)

Unlike school boards, municipal councils need not go to the people for permission to borrow a lot of money or to greatly increase operating expenditures.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Composition

Under Section 30 of the School Act, "the Minister shall for each board specify the number of trustees to be elected to the board, being not less than three nor more than seven.

For each subdivision within a division the Minister shall specify the number of trustees to be elected in the subdivision. The Minister may vary the number of trustees to be elected for each division, district or subdivision." There is no provision for school districts being divided into subdivisions and thus there are no city school board wards. The chairman of the board is elected by that board from among its own members.

Citizen Controls and Inputs

School board meetings must be held openly, in the same manner as municipal council meetings. Section 40 of the School Act states, "A board of a city district may and every other board shall, provide for the holding for an annual meeting of the electors for the discussion of board affairs which shall be held

(a) prior to March 31 in each year,

(b) at a convenient place within the district or division, and

(c) at a time specified by the board."

Under Section 5 of the Act, "... where a board of a city district receives a petition calling for a public meeting signed by 25 per cent of the parents of children in a school, or by 2,000 electors in the district, the board shall within 21 days of the receipt of the petition call a public meeting. Where a board (other than a board of a city district) receives a petition calling for a public meeting signed

(a) by 100 electors, or

(b) by a majority of electors in the district or division, whichever is the lesser,

the board shall within 21 days of receipt of the petition call a public meeting... At any public meeting called under the provisions of this section, the electors present may

(a) elect four persons to a committee, and

(b) by resolution of the meeting identify the areas of concern to be studied by the committee."

This committee must report to the board within twenty-one days.

Citizens also may petition for a plebiscite on large debenture borrowings according to Sections 101 to 104 of the School Act. The larger the school division or district, the smaller the petition need be — from 2 per cent of electors in areas with over 10,000 electors, to 15 per cent in areas with less than 500 electors.

Finally, Section 119 reads: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) limiting the amount of money a board may requisition from a municipality and may base the limit (expressed in an amount or as a percentage) on any criteria he considers proper, and

(b) providing any method, including a poll or plebiscite of electors, by which a board may exceed the limit specified pursuant to clause (a)."

Three plebiscites have been held this year in Alberta in accord with regulations promulgated under this section of the School Act.

COUNTY COUNCILS

Composition

The county councils are composed of up to 11 councillors from electoral divisions within the county. The reeve is chairman of the council and is elected from among the elected councillors. School committees and municipal committees of county council are established to run respectively schools and municipal affairs. The municipal committee must consist of not less than three members of the council. The organization of school committees has been discussed in another part of this papmhlet.

The county council "has and shall exercise all the rights, powers, privileges, duties and functions conferred on

(a) a council by The Municipal Government Act and The Municipal Election Act in respect of municipal matters, and

(b) a board of trustees of a school division by The School Act in respect of school matters." (Section 15, County Act)

Citizen Controls and Inputs

Because of Section 15, the various provisions for public meetings, elector inspection of books, etc., applying to either school boards or municipal councils, also apply to county councils.

In addition, Section 35 of the County Act provides for a special type of public meeting: "immediately after the election of the chairman (of the school committee) . . . (he) shall provide for a discussion of school affairs, during which time the electors of towns, villages and rural school districts included in the county for school purposes, shall be entitled to participate, to sponsor motions and vote on any matter or resolution that is brought before the meeting on school affairs."

SPECIAL PURPOSE BOARDS

While municipal councils, school boards and counties are the sole units of local government as such in Alberta, there are a number of quasi governmental organizations which play important roles in the overall governmental picture. These are the special purpose boards which are established through Provincial Government legislation in each area to carry out a certain function. In effect, these boards are imposed on a local area, or areas,

though the local municipal council may have a great deal to do with the actual operation of these boards. Because they are created by the Province in the same way that it creates municipal councils, school boards and counties, and because to varying degrees, they determine policy, they must be considered as a part of the overall local governmental system.

LOCAL SPECIAL PURPOSE BOARDS

There are four boards which are to varying degrees autonomous of local elected bodies.

Board of Police Commissioners

The Police Act enacted in 1971 requires in every urban municipality or hamlet of over 5,000 population, and permits in urban municipalities and hamlets with between 1,500 and 5,000 population, the establishment of a Board of Police Commissioners. The powers and duties of the Board and the rules and regulations covering proceedings of the Board, according to Section 13 of the Act, are to be prescribed by city council, but once having been determined by council, the Board has sole jurisdiction for the matters so delegated to it. The Board, however, is ultimately responsible to the Attorney General: "The Attorney General for Alberta is the constituted authority for the administration of justice within the Province and nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to change or alter this responsibility." (The Police Act, Section 22)

Library Board

The Libraries Act states that, "the council of a municipality

(a) may, on its own initiative, or

(b) shall, upon receipt of a petition therefore signed by at least one-tenth of the resident electors of the municipality,

pass a by-law providing for the establishment of a public library for the municipality". (Section 17)

Local Board of Health

The Public Health Act, in effect, prescribes that in every municipality there shall be a local board of health "responsible for carrying out the provisions of this Act, and the Provincial Board (of Health) may . . . delegate to the local board such of the power and authority of the Provincial Board as in the opinion of the latter is necessary to enable the local board to carry out satisfactorily the provisions of this Act." (Public Health Act, Section 32) The local board of health, unlike the other three boards mentioned here, has the authority to requisition funds from the municipality according to Section 35 of the Act.

In practice there are only two local boards of health (Edmonton and Calgary). Other

municipalities have decided to carry out their responsibilities through health units, as they are permitted to do under the Health Unit Act. As health units are in almost all cases inter-municipal (the City of Lethbridge health unit being the sole exception), they will be discussed as regional special purpose boards.

Hospital Boards

The hospital picture is somewhat complicated as hospitals may be owned by religious or lay corporations, municipalities, the Province, or the Federal Government. As most municipally owned hospitals are actually intermunicipal and are administered under district hospital boards, they will be discussed in the section dealing with regional special purpose boards. Edmonton and Calgary, however, each have their own municipal hospitals (the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Calgary General Hospital), and both have boards specifically and generally provided for by legislation.

The four types of boards mentioned (police, library, health and hospital), generally speaking, have local governmental responsibility independent of the elected bodies. For this reason they are sometimes referred to as

"semi-autonomous boards".

The Police Commission is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Police Act and is ultimately responsible to the Attorney General. The local board of health is responsible to the Provincial Board of Health, and the hospital boards are responsible to the Alberta Hospital Services Commission. The Library Board, while not responsible to any senior provincial body, is, nevertheless, empowered to develop its own policies. The Police Board is the only board, the powers and duties of which, according to the Act, council explicitly has responsibility for defining. Yet even here these powers and duties ultimately must be acceptable to the Attorney General. The four types of board have autonomy from councils, not only in determining policy (subject as mentioned above to provincial constraints) but, as well, in administering that policy and in administering and setting guidelines for their own staffs.

Budgets of the Library Board, and the Police Commission Board must be presented to the municipal council for approval in total, but items within the budget (that is priorities) are determined solely by the boards themselves. The local boards of health have even more autonomy in that they can requisition from council the funds they believe they require. The two municipal hospital boards, like the district hospital boards, requisition from their respective councils, funds for operations approved by the Alberta Hospital Services Commission, i.e. funds supplementary to those received from that Commission.

Councils and/or their staffs have strong representation on all these boards. The Police Commission Board "shall, at the option of the municipal council, consist of either

- (a) two persons designated by the Attorney General after consultation with the mayor and one member of the municipal council, designated by the municipal council,
- (b) three persons designated by the Attorney General after consultation with the mayor and, two members of the municipal council designated by the municipal council, but in either event no member of the municipal council shall be chairman of the board." (The Police Act, Section 12) There is no stipulation to the effect that persons designated by the Attorney General shall not be from the staff of the city; in fact, in Edmonton for instance, one of these persons has been the Chief City Commissioner.

In the case of the libraries "the board . . . shall consist of not less than five and not more than ten members, all of whom shall be appointed by the council of the municipality from among the residents thereof". (Libraries Act, Section 18, Subsection 3) "In municipalities where the population is 15,000 or more, no more than three members of the council shall be members of the board at the same time. In municipalities where the population is less than 15,000 no more than two members of the council shall be members of the board." (Libraries Act, Section 19) In practice, then, Alberta's largest cities could decide to have a board of five persons, three of whom being members of council, thus giving council voting control over the library board.

With regard to the local boards of health "in every city and town the local board shall consist of the mayor, the medical officer of health, the municipal engineer, if any, and three ratepayers who shall be appointed by the council for one, two and three years respectively and each of whom shall upon his retirement be replaced by a ratepayer appointed for three years from the date of appointment." (Public Health Act, Section 32) (18) There is no stipulation in the Public Health Act that ratepayer members of city or town local boards of health should not be councillors or servants of council, and again the council could maintain voting control of the board of health depending upon whom they appoint to it.

The Royal Alexandra Hospital Board composition is determined by a City of Edmonton by-law, and the Calgary Hospitals Board Act provides that the Board shall be composed of the mayor, four councillors and "four adult residents of the city", all to be appointed by council. Thus again the two city councils indirectly have control over their hospital boards.

Other Local Special Purpose Boards

In addition to these semi-autonomous boards, as they are often called, there are other local agencies which are provided for in provincial legislation, and which have some governmental functions in the cities.

The Planning Act provides that municipal planning commissions may be established in every municipality. Development appeal boards may be established by councils as well. The compositions and duties of these boards are stated in the Act.

Municipal planning commissions "shall be

composed of,

(a) in the case of a city, not less than five members, at least one half of whom shall be appointed officials of the city, and

(b) in all other cases, not less than three

members."

". . . but where the council is acting as an appeal body . . . (as opposed to the development appeal board so acting) no member of council may be appointed to the commission."

"The commission shall

(a) serve as a subdivision approving authority where authorized by this Act, and

(b) perform on behalf of the council such functions under a development control by-law or a zoning by-law as the council in accordance with this Act may assign to it.

The commission may

(a) advise and assist the council and coordinate the activities of the various departments and agencies of the municipality with regard to the planning of orderly and economical development within the municipality, and

(b) advise a subdivision approving authority with respect to a proposed subdivision where the land is situated within or near the boundary of the municipality". (Plan-

ning Act, Section 15)

The development appeal board may be established either through a zoning by-law, or in conjunction with the development control by-law. "The development appeal board shall be composed of a chairman and at least two other members to be appointed for a one-year term of office by resolution of a council and who shall not be dismissed except for cause. The persons to be appointed to the board shall include at least one member of the council, but shall not include officials or servants of the council, or members of the municipal plan-

ning commission, and a majority of the board shall be persons other than members of the council." (Planning Act, Section 108, Subsections 2 and 3) Under Section 128, a person affected by the decision of a development officer or a municipal planning commission may appeal to the development appeal board, according to the procedures and conditions for such appeals outlined under that section.

The Municipal Government Act itself provides for the creation of local special purpose boards within each municipality. Sections 208 and 209 of the Act provide for a Parks Board and a Recreation Board respectively (usually these are combined where they are established). Section 367 provides for the appointment of three sinking fund trustees to take charge of the sinking fund of the municipality or under Section 376 this may be established as a sinking fund board. Section 174 allows the establishment of organizations "for the purpose of managing and operating or advising in the management and operation of the mall or pedestrian promenade."

Perhaps more importantly, there is an omnibus section (Section 123) of the Municipal Government Act which provides for council having the authority to "by by-law appoint any board, association, commission or other organization that is considered desirable for the purpose of managing and operating or advising in the management and operation of any branch or department of the municipality's service and in the extension and improvement thereof." However, "there shall not be delegated to any such board, association, commission or other organization the right to appropriate or expend any public moneys other than such moneys voted by the council as are necessary for the carrying on of the management and operational functions of the organization." The constitution, duties, powers and functions of these bodies are to be prescribed by by-law. Under this section of the Act, exhibition boards, commission boards, boxing wrestling commissions, industrial development boards, etc., are variously created in different municipalities.

Finally a number of other Acts variously provide for local special-purpose boards. These include the Municipal Taxation Act which, under Section 43, provides for a Court of Revision to "hear and deal with such complaints against assessment as have been received by the municipal secretary, or the assessor in the case of a city, as provided by this Act," and to consist of "not more than five members, and any councillors, commissioners, municipal employee or municipal resident may be appointed thereto". The

Alberta Housing Act, under Section 41, provides for housing authorities to be incorporated by the minister responsible for the Alberta Housing Act (the Minister of Municipal Affairs); "The Minister may vest in a housing authority such powers, functions and duties as he considers necessary or advisable to carry out any agreement, including the power to acquire, operate and maintain housing projects and housing accommodation." The Recreation Development Act allows the minister in charge of the administration of the Recreation Act (at this time the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation) to "appoint boards or committees to carry out such duties as . . . prescribed by the Minister". The Homes for the Aged Act permits the establishment of "bodies corporate herein called foundations, with such powers and duties as are deemed expedient to carry out the terms of any master agreement . . . ", a master agreement being one that provides for undertaking such matters as may be necessary for the purpose of constructing, maintaining operating low rental housing units and homes for elderly persons, the agreement being between the Province and one or more municipalities. In practice, the agreement is among a number of municipalities with the exception of agreements between Edmonton and the Province and between Calgary and the Province. The Public Contributions Act, under Section 16, states that "a city, by by-law, may designate any person or body as an approving authority for the purpose of this Act and may make such rules, not inconsistent with this Act, or the regulations, as may be necessary to give proper effect to this Act within the city." Calgary presently has such an approving authority.

REGIONAL SPECIAL PURPOSE BOARDS

Regional special purpose boards are those serving a number of municipalities.

Regional Planning Commissions

The Planning Act provides for the establishment of regional planning commissions to be established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Seven such regions have been established to date in Alberta, covering 58% of the area of the Province, and 87% of the population. While not all municipalities within the regional planning areas are necessarily members of the commissions, all municipalities now contribute to a planning fund. Thus all municipalities within a regional planning area contribute to the commission's operations whether or not they are officially members. Member municipalities are all represented on the commission.

District Hospital Boards

The Alberta Hospitals Act provides for the establishment by the Minister of general hospital districts and auxiliary hospital districts. In fact, most general hospital districts go back many years, predating present municipalities and school divisions. When counties and coterminous boundaries were established in the early 1950's it was hoped by many that a way would be found to include hospital districts within the county system or at least that a way would be found to make them coterminous with school divisions and municipal districts. Neither change was effected, however, and as a result hospital districts vary widely in size and usually overlap a number of municipalities. The district may vary from one town (as in the case of Picture Butte) to a large area which includes several urban municipalities and pieces of a number of rural municipalities.

Some areas are not included in general hospital districts at all or else are in districts which exist on paper only, e.g. part of Strathcona County. Up to 1970 when every municipality was taxed four mills to be put into a general fund to be distributed to hospitals throughout the Province, this did not pose too many problems, but at present, with each district being responsible for providing "the last dollar" to its hospitals, inequities arise when areas are exempt from such responsibility, especially since every Albertan is free to be treated (though not by any doctor) in any hospital he chooses.

A hospital district is divided into wards (which may include a number of municipalities or pieces of municipalities) and the municipality with the largest population in each ward determines whether the representative (or in some cases, representatives) from the ward shall be appointed by that municipality or elected by all electors in the ward. There are some 100 general hospital districts in Alberta, about one half of which include directly elected board members. About one quarter of the hospital district boards are dominated by directly elected members. Most hospital districts are responsible for one general hospital. In addition there are some 50 other general hospitals in the Province which are owned either by a religious order, a lay corporation, the Province, or the Federal Government. As religious organizations find it increasingly difficult to support hospitals (even though they now play a relatively minor financial role compared to the Province) it is possible that hospital districts will take over responsibility in some way for many of the privately owned hospitals.

The difficulties posed by the fact that boundaries of hospital districts and municipalities are not co-terminous, include all those difficulties which led to the creation of the county system and to co-terminous boundaries between municipalities and school divisions.

Auxiliary Hospital Boards

The 20 auxiliary hospital boards are established to serve a larger area than general hospital boards. Generally speaking, auxiliary hospital board boundaries follow rural municipal boundaries. Like general hospital district boards, the boards of auxiliary hospital districts may be elected or appointed depending upon the choice made by the largest municipality in each ward. (Auxiliary hospitals treat long term or chronic illness, diseases or infirmities.)

District Nursing Homes Boards

The Nursing Homes Act provides, under Section 3, that the councils of the included municipalities in an auxiliary hospital district may apply to the Minister for the establishment of the district as a nursing home district. Most auxiliary hospital districts are now known as auxiliary hospital and nursing home districts and are run by the same board. In some locations where auxiliary hospitals do not exist there are nursing home districts solely. In total, there are 18 auxiliary hospital and nursing home district boards in Alberta, 13 nursing home districts, and 2 auxiliary hospital districts. Provision also now exists for combining general hospital and nursing home districts, and for combining general and auxiliary hospital districts.

Senior Citizen Lodge Boards

As has been noted, the Homes for the Aged Act permits a number of municipalities to combine to create a foundation to manage senior citizens homes. In most parts of the Province, foundation areas are co-terminous with municipal boundaries.

Health Unit District Boards

The Health Unit Act provides that urban municipalities with populations of less than 50,000 people, and rural municipalities, may be included in health units, to be administered by a board composed of one member from each ward within that unit. Where the ward includes a number of municipalities, the "contributing council representing the greatest number of residents in the ward shall appoint a member of that council to be the member of the board representing the ward." A health unit acts as the local board of health for the member municipalities. There are 25 health units.

Regional Library Boards

The Libraries Act provides for the establishment of regional library boards. Under Section 35 "a municipality, school division, or school district may enter into an agreement to associate with one or more municipalities, school divisions or school districts, to establish, maintain and operate a regional library". Regional library boards shall consist of

"(a) one member who shall be appointed by the council of each municipality, school division and school district that is a

party to the agreement,

(b) two members who shall be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council,

(c) such additional members as may be appointed by the representatives of participating units in the manner and to the number prescribed by the regulations."

Where one municipality has a population greater than the total of all other units with which it is combined, it may ensure that its members have a majority on the board. At the present time, there are two such regional libraries in Alberta.

Recreation Development Boards

The Recreation Development Act provides for municipalities to "authorize agreements with other municipalities or school authorities or both to provide for shared recreation services." The number of regional recreation boards has increased from two in 1968 to some fifty today. The areas these boards cover are not necessarily co-terminous with other kinds of regions.

Preventive Social Services Boards

Under the Preventive Social Services Act, a municipality may "enter into agreements with other municipalities . . . for the establishment, administration and operation of joint preventive social service programs". Twenty-five regional preventive social services boards have been formed.

Other Boards

Under Section 18 of the Municipal Government Act, a number of regional special purpose boards have been established in Alberta. These promote tourism or industrial development, administer regional parks, etc. Section 118 reads: "a council may pass a by-law authorizing the making of an agreement with the council of any other municipality, the board of trustees of a school district or division, or the Minister on behalf of any improvement district or special area

(a) for the joint construction, ownership, maintenance, operation or use of a public work or building, or

(b) for the performance of any other matter or thing . . ."

With the exception of regional planning commissions, new hospital districts, nursing home districts, and health units, regional board areas are determined by which municipalities (and in some cases school boards) enter into an agreement. The boundaries of regional planning commissions and the boundaries of health units are determined by the respective Ministers, but there is no compulsion on a municipality to join any of these. General hospital, auxiliary hospital and nursing home districts are determined by the Alberta Hospital Services Commission and the districts must be supported by the municipalities in the district. Hospital districts which existed prior to 1961 are protected, under the Alberta Hospitals Act (Section 4), from boundary changes.

It is clear that a number of regional bodies are being created in Alberta and that provision exists for many more. None of these need be co-terminous with one another and in the case of general hospital districts, they are not even co-terminous with the municipalities. When school authorities join recreation boards or regional library boards, the board boundaries will not be co-terminous with the municipalities where there are not co-terminous school and municipal boundaries.

There are wide variations in arrangements for funding, appointing and guiding both local and regional special purpose boards. Funding may be internal, from the municipalities, from the Province, or any combination of these. The boards may be responsible in some way to the local elected bodies, responsible to some agency of the Provincial Government, or both responsible to local elected bodies and some government agency. Board members may be appointed by a local government, by the Province, or by both, or may even be directly elected. In various cases board members may be either municipal councillors, municipal staffs or "private citizens". It would seem fair to say that there has been no philosophy guiding the establishment of local or regional special purpose boards. Each board has been set up independently as the need is seen to exist, and each board has different funding sources, compositions, authorities to whom it is responsible, and in the case of regional boards, different boundaries.

ADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

The organization of local government in Alberta has evolved slowly, virtually yearly by yearly, as decisions are made by the Provincial Government to modify the compositions of elected bodies, as decisions are made to pro-

vide safeguards for citizens in local areas against local government irresponsibility, and as decisions are made to establish, require to be established, or permit to be established, special purpose boards within and among municipalities. One may assume that at the time each decision was taken, it was to increase the efficiency of local governments and the Provincial Government in delivering a service, or to ensure that the local government was being responsive to certain concerns or needs of the citizen.

In particular, the following reasons for establishing special purpose boards have been offered: because they are less likely to be corrupt or giving in to special interests than elected bodies; because councillors do not have the time to look after certain specialized functions; because such boards can be a way of getting citizen input into the governmental process (through the "private" citizens who are appointed to these boards); because it is a way of ensuring that service gets proper and continued attention in the overall local government system; because it is a way of ensuring that responsibilities which the Province feels should be its own are carried out locally (i.e. with attention to co-ordination of local bodies and in a way which closely identifies with local needs).

This last reason in effect reflects a compromise between the demands of centralization and uniformity of service across the Province and the demands of decentralization and local control. This is particularly the case with those special purpose boards whose work is directed or regulated in some way by a provincial agency such as the board of police commissioners, local boards of health, and hospital districts.

The most important reason for regional special purpose boards is that there is no regional agency providing overall administration of services. Thus a regional special purpose board must be set up for each function requiring intermunicipal co-operation. It should be noted however, that what is the best size or kind of region may differ for different functions and that the present system does allow each department or board to establish boundaries which are best for its purposes.

Elected bodies have been organized, through decisions taken over the years, in a way which tends to take into account the conflicting demands of having an effective elected body, yet one that is also responsive to concerns of citizens. Thus, for instance, the ward system is set up with from three to ten wards so as not to create an overly large council, yet at the same time, a council with which citizens of the city may identify more closely than if all coun-

cillors were elected at large; or, citizens in a school board area may appoint a committee to advise the school board but the school board need not act on the recommendations of this committee. On the one hand, elected bodies have been kept small so that they can work effectively as a committee and so that competent people can usually be found to be elected to them. On the other hand, a number of provisions exist for citizens to challenge their elected representatives and to find out about their local government's affairs. Public meetings must be called in all municipalities and school areas if demanded by the electors. Electors must be furnished with reports once these have reached council. Provisions exist for plebiscites on certain school expenditures.

Essentially, the advantage of the present system lies in its flexibility and in its responsiveness to particular problems as they arise. If there is a need for senior citizens' homes, which each local municipality cannot be expected to provide, then provision is made for master agreements among the municipalities (and therefore for particular regional boards) to develop senior citizens lodges. If a municipality wants to give over some of its authority for administering a certain function to a certain board, it may do so under the Municipal Government Act. If the Province would like to see police being directed locally but with the Province having strong provincial control, then Boards of Police Commissions are set up by the Attorney General in urban areas over 5,000 population. If school boards and municipal governments in an area wish to combine their activities through a single government, then counties may be formed. Flexibility in local government organization exists in two respects:

(1) There is flexibility in that the Province can create new structures or modify old ones whenever it sees a need to do so.

(2) There is a certain degree of flexibility within a local area such that local governments can shape their systems to a limited extent and develop special purpose boards whenever they see the need.

PROBLEMS

It may be said that the strength of the local government organization is also its weakness. As an overall system, there has been little philosophy guiding the development of local government. This is not to say that within each component there have not been frequent attempts to rationalize the system and to give it a guiding philosophy. For instance, the Municipal Government Act of 1968 replaced a number of separate acts for towns, cities, Municipal Districts, etc. The School Act was revised and shortened last in 1970.

Yet it appears to be the case that every government department and agency seems able to affect the organization of local government in a way which is rational from its own standpoint, but which may not be so from the standpoint of the overall system. This is seen particularly in regard to the proliferation of special purpose boards.

The lack of existing bodies to provide for overall regional co-operation leads to the creation of increasing numbers of special purpose regional bodies. Such bodies are rarely co-terminous one with the other. General hospital districts, health unit districts, auxiliary hospital and nursing home districts, regional planning commissions, senior citizen lodge areas under master agreement, regional library boards, preventive social service areas, and recreation areas each have their own areas. When on top of this is added different regional boundaries for virtually every Provincial or Federal government department, and constituency boundaries for both Provincial and Federal Governments, it is no wonder that it is difficult for citizens to know just what region they are in for any given function and for officials to co-ordinate their efforts. It is not an exaggeration to say that among all three levels of government there are probably at least forty different ways of cutting up the Province of Alberta into regions.

More generally, the following concerns have been expressed about the proliferation of both local and regional special purpose boards: one, they reduce the authority of elected officials; two, they complicate and make incomprehensible the picture of government to the average citizen, and for that matter for many of the people who work in the government this reduces accountability to citizens on the one hand and reduces co-ordination of activities among officials on the other; three, such a proliferation may lead to competition for funding and power among agencies, thus exacerbating the problem of overlap on the one hand and negligence in meeting certain uninteresting or uneconomic gaps on the other; four, local government is generally weakened as the boards are often more accountable to the Province than to local government; five, the amount of energy actually spent attempting to co-ordinate the boards may become great in comparison to the time spent in actually delivering services.

On the other side of the coin, there seems to be no overall philosophy as to what it is that elected people on a council or school board should be expected to do. Councillors' responsibilities at least, continually multiply, and with the formation of every new special purpose board requiring council representation,

their workload further increases. Thus, in establishing a board a compromise must be made between the time available to elected representatives to sit on it and the demands of having that board controlled by elected people.

Often it may seem expedient to set up a special purpose board to carry out some local or regional function, or it may seem expedient to hand councils directly another responsibility through this or that Act. But such continual additions to the local government workload should be matched with compensating changes so that we do not ask our local government representatives to take on full time jobs without paying them accordingly, and/or so that we do not get bad government because elected representatives do not have the time to consider and

debate broad policies.

The local government elected official's time is not always a consideration when new provincial legislation or regulations are introduced, it seems, because there is no clear understanding as to what his role should be. With increasing urbanization and complexity in society it is becoming more and more apparent that his role should be in formulating policy; that is to say, in making judgments as to local priorities among different demands on scarce financial and environmental resources, and value judgments as to how local society should be organized to meet whatever human needs are felt to be most important. Unfortunately, the many demands on the elected officials' time to a large extent prevent such judgments being made with the kind of attention and wide debate that should be given such matters.

Legislation governing the composition of local elected bodies in the Province reflects the fact that traditionally they have been regarded as working committees as opposed to policy formulating parliaments. But responsibilities given to local government have radically changed in kind and have increased in numbers

over the last eighty years.

Furthermore, the larger cities have grown rapidly and elected Councils of a dozen people, or school boards of seven people, find it increasingly difficult to be in continuous and meaningful communication with very many of

the citizens they represent.

In the first part of the pamphlet we discussed how the local government areas had been increasingly consolidated and how for reasons of efficiency it may be well to consolidate them further and/or to set up regional government units. But this also means that local government is becoming less and less local. Such continual consolidation should be balanced with continued attempts to find better mechanisms for enhancing communication between elected representatives and citizens.

This is the third area where a philosophy of local government seems to be lacking. While provision exists in the County Act, the Municipal Government Act and the School Act for various forms of public meetings for plebiscites on certain matters and for openness of local government, these are all in the nature of formalistic checks on local governments. Less attention has been paid to finding means to promote positive inputs by citizens to the governmental process or to encouraging local governments to take the initiative in communicating to citizens.

None of these problems, it should be emphasized are unique to Alberta. Concern about the role of special purpose boards and regionalization, about establishing elected bodies so that they may be more effective, and about finding means to allow citizens to become somehow involved in the decision making process, are virtually universal, and all three concerns become heightened with increasing urbanization and technological complexity. Perhaps as it has so often in the past, Alberta can be among the leaders here in dealing with new local government problems.

ALTERNATIVES SPECIAL PURPOSE BOARDS

With regard to special purpose boards, the basic alternatives are to move either toward increasing functional decentralization (i.e. increasing the numbers or powers of special purpose boards within any given area), or towards increasing functional centralization (i.e. reducing the numbers or powers of boards; or most extremely, combining municipal and school governments into counties where these do not exist).

It is not unusual in municipalities outside Alberta to have numerous transit commissions, utility boards, freeway authorities, etc., separate from municipal government. Similarly, more special purpose boards could be created here. Functional decentralization could also be increased by giving existing special purpose boards more autonomy from elected bodies by allowing them to determine their own budgets, by having them directly elected, or by making them more fully responsible to (perhaps even appointed by) the Provincial Government. The arguments for and against functional decentralization have been discussed previously.

Most people who see the need for any change in the present system at all seem to be strongly in favour of more functional centralization. They would like to see municipal councils take more responsibility for functions now governed by special purpose boards. They conclude that this would increase control of

councils over functions generally in an area and thus would seem to improve co-ordination of operations, of budgets, of staff policies, etc. It would also ensure that elected representatives were responsible for more of the municipality's operations. Councillors would not have to sit on boards to effect liaison with, or control over, boards and thus time would be saved which could be spent more on overall policy decision-making.

The same arguments have been advanced for urging municipal and school administrations into counties in those areas where they do not now exist. However, there is much more disagreement on this matter and as was discussed in the first part of the pamphlet, it is unlikely that such consolidation can take place where there are separate school districts, as is the case in all cities of Alberta for instance.

At a regional level, functional centralization would have to take place through establishing some form of regional government structure. The various alternatives for this were discussed in Part I of the pamphlet. Here, it should be noted that full regional government as developed in parts of Ontario, say, would not be necessary to deal with the problems caused by regional special purpose boards. The British Columbia approach of establishing regional districts, within which any combination of municipalities can co-operate to deliver services through the one regional administration, would make unnecessary regional special purpose boards. These could all be replaced by one regional administration.

COUNCIL COMPOSITION

Very few people have suggested that councils or school boards should be composed of fewer, or less full-time people. However, the alternatives of increasing the number of people sitting on elected bodies, or of increasing the time they give to government have been considered.

The advantages of having trustees or councillors full-time people would be that they could perform their roles more diligently in all respects. Greatly increasing the number of elected people would be the more radical alternative as it probably would create a parliamentary system. Strange as this would appear, it has been pointed out that Prince Edward Island with one quarter of the population of Alberta's two bigger cities, has a parliamentary legislature. An increase in numbers could be achieved either by electing more representatives at large from the municipality or school board area, or, by increasing the number of wards. An experiment in increasing wards is now being tried in Winnipeg. Here the new City Council has 50 members from 50 different wards.

Whether more elected representatives are required, and/or whether the elected representatives require more time, is dependent upon the population of the local area and upon the local government system. In the largest cities of Alberta it may be that there should be more councillors and trustees and that some of these (on an executive committee, say,) should be full-time elected representatives.

CITIZEN CONTROLS AND INPUTS

The Winnipeg experiment was also designed to lead to more communication between council and citizens. The 50 councillors are organized into ten community committees according to the wards they come from.

To some extent provisions for such citizen control and input already exist as in the provisions for establishing a library, creation of an urban county, public hearings on transportation by-laws, etc. Perhaps with a bit more thought given to the matter in its totality as opposed to within each separate function, (libraries, transportation, etc.,) better means might be found to ensure continuing citizen interest in, and control over local government affairs. Thus, instead of providing for one shot single function demands which citizens can make on council, controls should perhaps be formulated in terms of continuing multi-purpose mechanisms for effective communication between council and its citizens. An example of such mechanisms may be found in the Winnipeg experiment mentioned above.

There, the community committees are responsible for meeting openly at least once a month, at a regular time and place, to consider the business of the community. The city council is to provide suitable facilities within each community for use by the community committees in discharging their functions. Specifically, the community committee "must develop and implement techniques that increase the two-way flow of information between the city and residents of the community. In this way the citizens will be aware of the existing city policies, programs and budgets and will be able to develop views which may be communicated to the council".

In Alberta, the school advisory boards, which replace within school divisions the old school districts, are within the school system a step in the same direction. The role of school advisory boards is to advise divisional boards on French language and religious instruction, to nominate a teacher, or "to advise the board of the division and carry out such functions as may be delegated to it by the board of the division". (School Act, Section 28)

A number of other possibilities exist for increasing communication between local governments and citizens.

In some cases, wards could be made more meaningful in terms of community of interest represented. Edmonton's ward system in particular is not based on community of interest, and it has been argued that this being so, the whole point of the ward system is lost.

Involvement of citizens in the work of governing structures could be increased through council and boards making more extensive use of advisory committees. Advisory committees, however, have often been found to be frustrating experiences for citizens sitting on them and for agencies they are established to advise. This is particularly so when the advisory committee's role is only very generally defined, or when higher authorities prevent the body it is advising from acting on the advice.

Many people suggest that except for technical advisory committees composed of specialists, advisory committees should be replaced with some form of community committee which would be responsible in each case for two-way communication between govern-

mental bodies and citizens in one community. It has also been suggested that if citizen groups are to effectively present their case to governmental bodies, that funds should be made available to them—whether these are special interest groups, community groups, or advisory committees—such that these groups could develop position papers and independently undertake research on their own. New regulations governing the release of information from local administrations might be adopted as well so that all persons in an area could take advantage of research and information available to local administrations. Finally, problem oriented committees such as have been organized by the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future. could be created in local areas from time to time to bring together citizens, researchers and administrators for the purpose of developing recommendations to local governments.

Perhaps through measures such as these, citizen controls on local government from below can replace, to some extent, the checks and balances provided by special purpose boards within the local areas, and the need for Provincial controls from above.

CONCLUSIONS

It may be said that in Alberta (as for the most part, elsewhere) issues in local government centre around the lack of overall Provincial policies regarding local government—policies which are shared by all departments and agencies and followed by them in implementing their various programs.

- (1) There is a need for a policy on regionalism; at a minimum, a need to standardize regional units of administration for Provincial agencies and to designate areas within which a number of intermunicipal activities might all take place. Hopefully, these could be the same regions. Without such a policy, there will continue to be problems of annexation proceedings around the growing urban centres, of inequality and inefficiency in the delivery of services in a region, and inequities in the regional taxation system. Planning will be hindered, much time will be wasted on co-ordinating efforts among a number of different jurisdictions and the situation will be generally confusing to citizens and officials alike.
- (2) There is a need for a policy on local government distinctions. Is it meaningful to distinguish between villages, towns and cities for instance and not between Alberta's two metropolitan centres and other centres? The village, town, city distinction is by now almost only of historical interest as for the most part, distinctions in powers and responsibility are differentiated on the size of urban unit as opposed to its corporate status. Just as the special areas have been given a unique status in rural Alberta because of their unique historical, economic and environmental problems, and just as new towns and summer villages have been distinguished from other urban units, special status might be given to different types of urban units within the Province; and, should they be established, to differen! types of regional units, according to density of population, type of economic base, and growth rate.
- (3) There is a need for a policy on the division between local government and provincial responsibilities and powers such that these match the division between local government and provincial financial resources. The division of responsibilities should also be based on the nature of functions (whether they are best delivered by centralized or decentralized governments). The taxation system must be developed not only to reflect provincial-local division of responsibilities but as well the consequences of the property tax for development. The taxation system cannot be separated either from a philosophy regarding the role of local

government, nor from an understanding of the consequences of the taxation system for planning and development.

- (4) There is a need for a policy on the place of both intra- and inter-municipal special purpose boards. Such a policy must address itself to the conditions under which such boards may be permitted or encouraged and to their relationship to elected bodies and citizens. If existing special purpose boards are found to be not the most desirable means of administering their respective functions, then alternatives must be found to develop regional all purpose administrative bodies (regional governments) and to increase the effectiveness of local elected bodies.
- (5) There is a need for a policy on the role and responsibilities of elected local bodies and on the structures found to be consistent with such roles and responsibilities in a complex and urbanizing age. A system must be developed whereby elected representatives at the local level are paid fairly for their time and whereby they can concentrate on meaningful policy formulation and avoid becoming overburdened with house-keeping matters.
- (6) There is a need for a policy on citizen involvement in, and checks on local decision making. Means must be found to enable citizens to know as easily as possible what is going on in their local governments and to communicate their thoughts about this intelligently and quickly to the decision makers. Without adequate means for public involvement the whole point of local government itself is lost. At the same time, present mechanisms legislated to provide citizens with protections and input opportunities should be appraised in terms of their effect on the overall local government system.

As urbanization, societal complexity and technological sophistication further develop, the need for such policies can only increase.

OUESTIONS

- (1) Would regional governments be useful in Alberta? If so:
- (a) on what basis should they be formed? (urban centred, or homogeneous? large or small? differing in area or in populaton since both cannot be equal?)
- (b) Should regional governments be single tier which would involve the abolition of present municipalities, or two tier?
 - (i) If two tier, should the regional government be directly elected, appointed from the included municipalities, or a combination of the two?

- (c) What distinctions might be made among powers given to different types of regional government, in metropolitan areas or frontier regions for instance?
- (d) Should regional powers as opposed to municipal powers be legislated separately for each region as in Ontario; should they be uniformly legislated, perhaps within categories; or, should they be developed by the regional municipalities themselves (as to a large extent, it is the case in British Columbia)?
- (e) Should regional governments be legislated to encompass the whole region or should they include only municipalities desiring to participate?
- (f) Should the municipalities be the primary taxing agencies as is the case in other provinces, or should it be the regions?
- (2) (a) Apart from constitutional difficulties, and other limitations associated with the fact that Alberta has two school systems, should the county approach be extended into the city and other areas where it does not now exist?
- (b) Should protecting the rights of the Catholic or Protestant minority in terms of their each being able to have their own publicly supported school system be extended to other religions, or to groups with certain education philosophies, or should there be only one public education system? If so, what measures might be taken to amalgamate systems? Whose agreement would be required?
- (3) What powers and functions should local governments as opposed to the Provincial Government have? Is there any point in local governments having a small amount of financial responsibility for, say, hospitals so that they can have a small amount of local control? Does the whole concept of 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' have to be changed? Would a bill of rights guaranteeing the rights of municipalities in relation to the provinces be useful? Might some local government functions be administered through smaller governments than some of the present municipalities instance, through neighbourhood councils in the larger cities, or through electoral divisions in some of the larger rural municipalities? What functions?
- (4) What taxation sources should be given to local governments? Should the property tax be pooled among municipalities? This would achieve equality of revenue, but on the other hand, would reduce local initiative to tax. Or might certain categories of property tax, such as industrial, be pooled only? Could the prop-

- erty tax be abolished, being replaced by other taxes, perhaps by the income tax such that collections made at the federal level are rebated to the provinces and then to the municipalities according to the percentage of the federal tax base imposed by each municipality?
- (5) Under what conditions should special purpose boards be established? Would it be worthwhile to establish some sort of regional administration to handle various intermunicipal special purpose boards even if these do not include all municipalities in the region? Are existing special purpose boards both those that are created through legislation and those created separately in each municipality still necessary or desirable? Are new special purpose boards required for functions not now handled by such boards?
- (6) How might elected bodies be structured so as to allow them to deal more effectively with policy matters? Should they be given fewer responsibilities such as a decrease in the number of special purpose boards they are required to sit on? Could a complete overview of the responsibilities of municipal councils, including possibly a redrafting of the Municipal Government Act, reduce the complexities to be considered by elected representatives? Should elected representatives be increased in number on school boards and councils to such a point that they might form a parliament and cabinet system as opposed to the present committee system? Should some or all elected representatives be required to act as full-time legislators and/or administrators just as the Mayors in the larger cities are now? Could modification of the ward system increase the representativeness of councils without leading to fights among sectional interests on council?
- (7) What new mechanisms might be found to increase further communication between citizens and local governments: community councils? advisory committees? Task Committees, etc.? Who should pay for these the city? local areas? voluntary subscription?

NOTES

- 1. Until 1951, cities were governed by individual city charters. In that year, the City Act (now incorporated into the Municipal Government Act) established a common basis for the government of the nine cities wholly in the Province. (Lloydminster has its own charter which is recognized by both the Saskatchewan and Alberta governments.)
- 2. The significance of a change in status appears to be chiefly that towns can sell vacant tax recovery lots without the Minister's approval, whereas villages may not; and that cities may hold title to public land whereas in towns and

villuges the Crown owns public land. There are also differences in the composition of councils as explained in Part III of this pamphlet. One would have to investigate all Provincial legislation and departmental regulations to get a full picture of what difference it makes being a village, town or city. In any event, it appears that most differentiations in legislation are based on size of urban unit regardless of its status.

- 3. Swan Hills was a new town from 1959 to 1967, as was Whitecourt from 1961 to 1971. In an unusual application of the New Towns Act, one of Alberta's oldest towns, St. Albert, was established as a new town from 1957 to 1962, to help it cope with rapid growth due to overspill from Edmonton.
- 4. Dr. E. J. Hanson was commissioned in 1967 by the City of Edmonton to study amalgamation and annexation possibilities in the Edmonton metropolitan area. His report, issued in 1968, recommended the City boundaries be extended to include Namao, Oliver Hospital, St. Albert, Sherwood Park and the refinery area of Strathcona County an area of approximately 292 square miles. This boundary for the City is being promoted by Edmonton City Council. Sherwood Park, incidentally, is one of the few exceptions to the rule of separating urban from rural areas in creating municipalities. It is still an unincorporated hamlet of over 17,000 population.
- 5. For a comprehensive review of the local government system in Alberta up until 1956 see "Local Government in Alberta", by Dr. E. J. Hanson (McClelland & Stewart, 1956). Reading this book is essential if one is to get a good understanding of how Alberta's local government system came to be what it is.
- 6. As one means of dealing with this problem, a 1971 amendment to the Municipal Government Act provides that:
 - "(1) Two or more municipalities may enter into an agreement for the sharing of taxes imposed for municipal purposes by one of the municipalities upon a person having assessable and taxable property in that municipality.
 - (2) The purpose of the agreement shall be to reflect the extent to which each municipality provided services either directly to the person or to his employees.
 - (3) An agreement entered into under subsection (1) may be amended or rescinded by and with the consent of the councils of all the municipalities party thereto.
 - (4) If the councils are unable to agree to the amendment or rescinding of the agreement, an application may be made by one or more of the councils of the municipalities to the Local Authorities Board which shall decide the matter.
 - (5) A municipality may appropriate from its general revenues such sums as are required to meet its obligations under an agreement entered into under this section." (Section 118.1)
- 7. "Non-Instructional Positions, Functions and Costs in School Jurisdictions in Alberta", a report prepared for the Minister of Education, Government of Alberta, by E. A. Holdaway, May 1972.
- 8. Because of the hierarchy of urban centres, there is a particular problem of overlap with urbancentred regions. Suppose two large urban centres are to be centres of regions and, as usually is

the case, there is a smaller centre halfway between them with its own smaller service area.
Either this smaller centre and its service area
must be included wholly within one region or
the other, in which case there is an imbalance
between the regions because the line is closer
to one bigger centre than the other, or else the
smaller centre must be split down the middle—
a not very desirable alternative. For instance,
Red Deer and Wetaskiwin are the centres of
regions. Should Ponoka and its hinterland, including the area south of Ponoka, be part of
the Wetaskiwin region, or should Ponoka be
split down the middle?

- 9. The Canada Yearbook has a section in each edition dealing briefly with local government organization in every province, including a summary of recent developments.
- 10. Among the provincial boards with power over local governments, the Local Authorities Board is probably the most important. The three-man Board "has all the necessary jurisdiction
 - (a) to inquire into the merit of any application of a local authority for permission to raise money by way of debenture or upon the security of stock, as provided in this Act,
 - (b) to supervise the expenditure of moneys borrowed by a local authority as provided in this Act,
 - (c) to deal with the financial affairs of local authorities, as provided in this Act,
 - (d) to grant permission for the extension of the time for repaying the indebtedness incurred by a local authority for the cost of its public works, as provided in this Act,
 - (e) to separate land from an urban municipality as provided in this Act,
 - (f) to order compromises of tax arrears as provided in this Act, and
 - (g) to deal with plans of subdivision as provided in this Act.
 - (2) In addition to the jurisdiction and powers mentioned in subsection (1), the Board has all necessary jurisdiction and powers to perform such duties as are from time to time assigned to it by statute or pursuant to statutory authority.

In matters within its jurisdiction the Board may order and require any person, or local authority, to do forthwith or within or at any specified time and in any manner prescribed by the Board, so far as it is not inconsistent with this Act or any other Act conferring jurisdiction, any act, matter or thing that such person, or local authority, is or may be required to do under this Act or under any other general or special Act, and may forbid the doing or continuing of any act, matter or thing that is in contravention of any such Act or of any regulation, rule, order or direction of the Board.

The Board may, as to matters within its jurisdiction, hear and determine all questions of law or of fact.

Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the Board has, in regard to the amendment of proceedings, the attendance and examination of witnesses, the production and inspection of documents, the enforcement of its orders, the payment of costs, and all other matters necessary or proper for the due exercise of its jurisdiction or otherwise for carrying any of its powers into effect, all such powers, rights, privileges and immunities as are vested in the Supreme Court

of Alberta." (Sections 27, 28, 29, 30, Local Authorities Board Act)

A Local Authority is defined as "any city, town, new town, village, county or municipal district, a school division, a school district not being a school district included in a school division, a hospital district, an irrigation district, and a drainage district". (Section 2 (d))

- 11. Until January 1st, 1970, every municipality contributed four mills toward the costs of the Alberta Hospitalization Benefits Plan. In 1969, the total resulting municipal contribution was \$12,202,000, the total Provincial contribution \$61,901,000, and the Federal contribution about \$67,737,000. Out of this fund general hospitals and auxiliary hospitals were funded. Where district hospitals (i.e. those hospitals owned by a number of municipalities through a district board), overspent their budget, the municipalities were requested to supplement the Hospitalization Benefits Plan grant. Now that the four mill levy has been dropped, district hospitals requisition municipalities for funds required above those provided by the Plan. The municipalities must pay these grants if the hospital budget has been approved by the Alberta Hospital Services Commission.
- 12. Urban Crisis: Alberta Municipal Finance Study, presented by the Cities of Alberta, The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Public School Boards in each City, January, 1968, to the Government of Alberta. The quotation is

- from the introductory letter. This study gives quite a complete and up to date analysis of local government finances in Alberta.
- 13. Under the new Senior Citizens Shelter Assistance Act, however, renters over the age of sixty-five now receive a \$50 renter assistance grant.
- 14. Urban Crisis, page 11
- 15. Ibid, page 4
- 16. City Councillors may also be known as Aldermen.
- 17. Proprietary elector refers to "a person whose name appears in the assessment role in respect of land liable to assessment and taxation for general municipal purposes" and to "a person who is liable for the payment of a mobile unit license". A proprietary elector need not be a citizen or a resident and may vote for mayor and councillors as well as on money by-laws. Only proprietary electors may vote on money by-laws unless a council (under a recent amendment of the Municipal Government Act) resolves to extend the franchise in relation to voting on money by-laws to all electors. Few councils have taken such a step.
- 18. In Edmonton, a special provision of the Municipal Government Act allows for the additional appointment of a dentist to the local Board of Health.

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